Edward Perigal.

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Edward Perigal.

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THE SACRED EXHIBITION, AT *WORTHINGTON HALL*; OR SELECT PAINTINGS

FROM

SCRIPTURE HISTORY,

CONSIDERED WITH A VIEW TO

RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT.

BY S. S.

AUTHOR OF SUNDAY LECTURES, WILLIAM SEDLEY, &c.

Some lofty theme let judgment firſt ſupply,
Supremely fraught with grace and majeſty:
For fancy copious, free to ev'ry charm
That lines can circumſcribe or colours warm;
Still happier, if that artful theme diſpenſe
A poignant moral, or inſtructive ſenſe.
Maſon's Tranſlation of Du Freſnoy's Art of Painting.

London:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON,

NO. 62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

By D. Bye and H. Law, St. John's Square, Clerkenwell.

MDCCXCIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

"I BELIEVE it very rarely happens, that any one circumſtance of life, is ſo well conſidered as it might be with the deſign of extracting all poſſible pleaſure from it. However I will not omit one, which might be improved to a vaſt degree, and that is the getting a fine collection of Mental Pictures: what I mean is, furniſhing the mind with pleaſing Images, whether of things real, or imaginary; whether of our own forming, or borrowed from others. This is a collection which every one may have, and which will finely employ every vacant moment of one's time; ſome may be in the delicate, and others in the great kind, or to ſpeak more like a Connoiſſeur, in the Parmegiano, and in the Raphael taſte."

Richardſon's Art of Painting.

THE

SACRED EXHIBITION

AT

WORTHINGTON HALL,

OR

SCRIPTURE PAINTINGS

CALCULATED TO

RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT.

By J. S.

London:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON,

No. 62, St. Paul's Church-Yard.

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TO

MRS. TRIMMER.

DEAR MADAM,

AT a time when many books of an improper tendency are circulated by anonymous authors, it becomes the duty of thoſe who are anxious for the beſt intereſts of ſociety, to diſcountenance that concealment, which may be uſed as a ſhelter to nefarious principles. Yet, as conſiderations of a private nature influence me to ſuppreſs my name, I am certain the public will eſteem the permiſſion of dedicating the following pages to *You*, as a ſufficient ſanction for the purity of their moral and religious ſentiments.

Acknow-

Acknowledging with gratitude the obligation which is due to your diſintereſted kindneſs, I am afraid that the offering ſhould be thought unworthy of that friendſhip by which it is countenanced. But if I am not deemed by my readers undeſerving the diſtinction I have ſolicited, they will pardon me the pride, which I cannot but feel, in being allowed thus publickly to aſſure you that I am, with the higheſt eſteem and reſpect,

My Dear Madam,

Your much obliged Friend,

And humble Servant,

S. S.

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ERRATA.

Page v, line 2, *dele* ſuitable
29, 11, *for* action *read* occaſion
12, *before* explicit *inſert* an
65, laſt, *for* them *read* it;
66, 3, *for* either of theſe books *read* that book
19, *for* Mr. Wentworth *read* Mr. Worthington
69, 3, *for* Worthington *read* Wentworth
73, 17, *for* in *read* on
80, 2, *for* carried to *read* arrived at
10, *for* aſpiring *read* inſpiring
82, 1, *read* our thoughts
90, 14, *for* thy *read* they
110, 11, *dele* many
129, laſt, *before* through *inſert* and
142, 6, *for* to do *read* buſineſs
148, 15, *for* ſpecie *read* ſpecies
154, 5, *for* expected *read* expect
162, 1, *for* theſe *read* thoſe
212, 17, *for* their minds *read* them

THE

SACRED EXHIBITION, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

IN a beautiful and ſporting part of Yorkſhire, ſtood the ſeat of Mr. WORTHINGTON, a gentleman, whoſe hoſpitality, benevolence, and good ſenſe, had gained him more reſpect amongſt his neighbours, than he derived from a very affluent fortune and large eſtate. In the center of the park, the venerable gothic ſtructure of the pariſh church, reared its pointed ſteeple amidſt the ſurrounding trees; where it had been erected near an

ancient monaſtery, of whoſe original magnificence a few broken arches and ſhattered columns were the only veſtiges remaining; and theſe mouldering ruins added a conſiderable ornament to the ſurrounding landſcape.

The church would have been in the ſame ſtate of dilapidation as the religious ſanctuary, had not the decays of time been occaſionally repaired by the pariſhioners, who were deſirous of preſerving the conſecrated fabrick, though extremely ineligible in its ſituation; being at a diſtance from any houſe, and at the fartheſt boundary of an extenſive, though not populous pariſh. In order to remedy this inconvenience, the good Mr. Worthington, who liberally contributed both to the ſupport and embelliſhment of the church, provided every Sunday a cold collation; of which, after having attended Divine Service, any of the neighbouring

bouring poor were welcome to partake, upon the further condition, that they behaved with the ſobriety and decency ſuitable to the day. As the greateſt number of them were his tenants, he uſually ſpent ſome time with them on theſe occaſions, and in the true ſpirit of patriarchal ſimplicity, enquired after the ſucceſs of their rural labours; and the lively intereſt he took in their concerns, with his conſtant endeavour to promote their welfare, rendered him ſo general a favourite, that his religious and moral inſtructions were commonly well received.

Nor was this hoſpitality confined by Mr. Worthington to his indigent neighbours; his polite and friendly invitation extended to thoſe in ſuperior ſtations, and many perſons of rank and reſpectability were induced to be more regular in their attendance upon public worſhip, from being

assured of an asylum in case of unfavorable weather.

Mr. Worthington, for his own satisfaction, would have greatly preferred spending the sabbath in undisturbed meditation; but he considered it as likely to be productive of more good, if he could excite numbers to the practice of their public duties, and he was the less scrupulous of making this sacrifice, as his leisure and independence allowed him other opportunities for retirement.

When once a fashion is established in a community, its general effect is similar to the power of habit on an individual; and it soon became customary with the genteel people in the vicinity of Worthington Hall, to go constantly to church, and afterwards visit their beneficent patron, who always received them with chearful politeness; yet endeavoured to appropriate the principal

subject

ſubject of converſation to the ſolemnity of the day, and ſuitable to the devotional exerciſes in which they had been jointly engaged.

Amongſt the party aſſembled one evening in the drawing room, was a ſenſible and accompliſhed young man, who had imbibed ſome notions on the continent, which did not accord with the principles of his amiable hoſt. Mr. Laſcelles, in making the tour of Europe, had acquired a fondneſs for diſſipation, and a contempt of religious duties; circumſtances by no means uncommon in ſuch as have ſpent their early years in an itinerant ſtate, and in catholic countries.

A ſhowery day, being ſucceeded by a fine evening, many of the peaſants were enjoying its delightful ſerenity in the park; and Mr. Laſcelles, as he looked at them from the window, lamented that the laws

of this nation ſhould diſcourage that mirth and feſtivity, by which he had obſerved the Sabbath greatly enlivened to the lower orders of people in France and Italy. " You have, ſurely, Charles," replied Mr. Worthington, " in making this compariſon, omitted a material conſideration, which is, the difference both of religion and manners between thoſe countries and our own. The ſubjects of a deſpotic government, and the bigots to a myſterious faith, may be allowed to drown the cares of life, in the thoughtleſſneſs of mirth, and to baniſh reflection by frivolous amuſement; but it has ever been the peculiar diſtinction of *Britons*, to be deemed a *thinking people*; and I fear, it is owing to the excurſions of ſo many of our young nobility into foreign climes, that ſuch ſentiments have been propagated, and ſuch examples of profanation lately exhibited on the Sabbath-day, as, if

continued,

continued, will ſoon aſſimilate us, in this reſpect, with pagan or catholic countries. I would not have *Religion* affect a melancholy and diſguſting gloom; yet, I cannot admit her to aſſume the motley garb of *Folly*; but I agree that *Chearfulneſs*, though not *Levity*, ſhould inſpire her feſtivals. Perhaps, therefore, as we have no other amuſement that will at preſent more properly enliven Worthington Hall, it may not be diſagreeable to the company to viſit the Picture Gallery, which you uſed to call my Exhibition; and that name will probably be ſtill a recommendation to you and our gayer friends."

The noble collection of paintings to which the party were invited, conſiſted of ſome of the fineſt productions of genius from the Dutch, Flemiſh, and Italian ſchools, to which were added ſome admirable pictures by the moſt eminent

artiſts of our own country, ſo that it could not fail to afford the higheſt gratification to every ſpectator of taſte. The obſervations made upon them by their amiable proprietor, had in early life fixed a deep impreſſion upon the mind of Mr. Laſcelles, who in his boyiſh days had been partially attached to Mr. Worthington, and who now eagerly renewed the acquaintance he had formerly thought ſo agreeable.

It is natural to reviſit with peculiar intereſt, the ſcenes which delighted us in youth, and to recall with pleaſure the remembrance of thoſe innocent feelings, whoſe impreſſion, no change of circumſtance, or length of time, can totally obliterate from the mind. Mr. Laſcelles experienced this ſenſation on again entering the gallery; for in many of the pictures he had formerly ſeen, he immediately recognized his old acquaintance.

"I now recollect, my dear Sir," ſaid he,

"that

" that in my juvenile days, you were accuſtomed to entertain me with reading ſome illuſtrations you had compoſed, of the characters and events of Scripture Hiſtory, as they are pourtrayed in the different paintings before us. May I not hope that you will renew that pleaſure, and favor me with the peruſal of the manuſcripts, the purport of which I well remember, though the particulars are forgotten?"

" You have greatly honoured the reſult of my ſolitary reflections," returned Mr. Worthington, " by your recollection; but it is not likely that what met your approbation when a boy, will be equally pleaſing to your riper judgment. The trifling work in queſtion, was written merely to divert my own attention, during the confinement of a long indiſpoſition, when I paſſed many hours in this apartment, and found the em-

ployment a ſeaſonable relief from the uneaſy ſenſations of languor and laſſitude."

The hint Mr. Laſcelles had ſuggeſted, was eagerly adopted by the whole company, who ſolicited for the ſame indulgence he had formerly obtained. Mr. Worthington, after declining it for ſome time, was at length prevailed upon by their repeated entreaties, to ſay he would oblige his friends; and this compliance was the more deſirable, as there was no ſermon in the afternoon, the Rector of the pariſh (as is the caſe in many places in the country,) being obliged, immediately after evening prayers, to attend another church at ſeveral miles diſtance. It was therefore a reaſonable expectation, that the written ſentiments of ſuch a man as Mr. Worthington might have a good effect, or at leaſt ſuggeſt matter for ſerious converſation.

The

The next Sunday, as ſoon as dinner was over, the company unanimouſly deſired that they might retire to the *Picture Gallery*, (or, as from the ſhape of the room it was more frequently called, the *Grand Saloon*,) entreating Mr. Worthington there to fulfil his engagement, and to read to them the remarks which Mr. Laſcelles had mentioned at their late meeting.

Mr. Worthington at firſt endeavoured jocoſely to ſet aſide this requeſt, by treating it, as originally made, and now earneſtly renewed, entirely out of compliment to the gentleman who propoſed it; aſſuring them, that he had not the vanity to ſuppoſe himſelf capable of becoming their Inſtructor, though he thought it a beneficial cuſtom, occaſionally to tranſcribe his ſerious meditations for his own uſe; and that as his good friends were all capable of thinking for themſelves, he ſhould rather expect

assistance from their remarks upon his Sacred Exhibition. But it was not so easy as Mr. Worthington imagined, to obtain a release from his promise; and every one eagerly insisting that he could not retract without occasioning them a great disappointment, he was too honourable to break his word; but expressed a modest reluctance to acquiesce. "If, said he, I am not permitted to recede, I must obey;" and with a grace peculiar to himself, he led the way to the proposed apartment, where the picture of *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, was universally approved as the subject of reflection for the present evening. The author of the promised MS. then asking the company to excuse him for a moment, retired to fetch it from his study. He was immediately followed thither by Mr. Lascelles, who apologized for his intrusion, by saying, "I am sorry to detain you from your visitors,

but

but I wiſh before we return to them, you would juſt give me an abridgment of their characters; for no opportunity has yet occurred to me of being introduced in the neighbourhood, which has almoſt changed inhabitants ſince I left it."

"There is not time," replied Mr. Worthington, "for any detail.—With the ſuperior virtues and talents of Mr. Wentworth, you are well acquainted. Honeſt farmer Hind is a good deal richer, but in no other reſpect altered during your abſence. Mr. Northcote is an old ſtandard at Beech-grove: with his ſon Theodore you are probably better acquainted than I am; his two eldeſt daughters are reckoned the greateſt beauties in the county, the reſt of his children are too young for me to delineate. Thornby is the name of the reſpectable widow at the white houſe on the hill, and ſhe never omits coming to church, attended by her amiable

and numerous family; the females of which, though leſs celebrated for outward attractions than the Miſs Northcotes, poſſeſs, in my opinion, ſuperior charms in the elegant ſimplicity of their manners, and the unaffected piety of their hearts. Colonel Hoare is the moſt ancient freeholder in the pariſh; yet, it is but of late years that he is become an inhabitant. He has a wife, but no children; and the young men who accompany him are his nephews. Sir Lewis Mandeville has taken the large manſion called the Grange; he viſits here, but we are not *intimate*. The Mitfords are unaltered in worth and manners, though I ſuppoſe you find that age has crept upon them ſince your departure. Squire Hunt, &c. will ſoon ſhew themſelves in converſation.—We muſt now, however, go back to our neighbours; and as, my dear Charles, you are returned to ſettle amongſt them,

be

be careful to aſſociate only with the moſt reſpectable, and to eſtabliſh ſuch a reputation, as may deſervedly rank you with the firſt of that number."

PAINTING,

PAINTING, No. 1.

Saul and the Witch of Endor.

From 1 Sam. Chap. xxviii. Ver. 12.

And when the Woman ſaw Samuel, ſhe cried with a loud Voice; and the Woman ſpake to Saul, ſaying, Why haſt thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?

WHEN the Gentlemen re-entered the Saloon, they found the greateſt part of the company ſtanding in a ſemi-circle before the picture they had choſen for the ſubject of the evening's improvement, and Mr. Mitford was obſerving, "that though he had ſome years ſince made the tour of

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Europe, and ſeen the fineſt paintings of France and Italy, it was his opinion, that the art of man could ſcarcely execute a deſign more happily than the piece in queſtion. " Do but obſerve," continued he, pointing to it with the fore finger of his right hand, " what a correſpondent caſt of ſhade is impreſſed upon the gloomy ſcene! The terror and ſurprize of the woman, and the ſtrong contention of fear and expectation in the countenance of Saul; with that thin pale " ſhadow of a ſhade" which repreſents the reſpectable form of the aged Samuel, are each ſo judiciouſly imagined, and ſo exquiſitely finiſhed, as to excite in the ſpectator emotions, almoſt equal to thoſe he contemplates on the canvaſs, from which the intereſting figures appear to be as perfectly detached as ourſelves."—" For myſelf," added Theodore Northcote, "I think the painter who could ſo ſtrongly catch the impreſſion

impreſſion of the paſſions, wanted only the fire of Prometheus to raiſe a perfect creation." "It is certainly," ſaid the venerable Mr. Wentworth, taking off his ſpectacles, and ſhutting them up while he ſpoke, "it is certainly a moſt ſtriking diſplay of profeſſional talents; yet how far do the higheſt attainments of mortal excellence, fall ſhort of the minuteſt work of God! for in this inſtance," continued he, "as in many others, we are reminded of theſe admirable lines of Pope:

"In human works, tho' labour'd on with pain,
"A thouſand movements ſcarce one purpoſe gain;
"In God's, one ſingle can its end produce:
"Yet ſerves to ſecond too ſome other uſe."

What an immenſe expence of time and labour have been employed in bringing the fine arts to perfection; and yet they are but the appendages to our gratification, and not eſſential in the life of man: while, on the

the contrary, in the diffuſive plans of Divine economy, beauty and utility are ever united; and when the pencil of Nature combines her moſt elegant ſhades, they are ſtill objects of *advantage* as well as of *admiration*. The variegated plumage of the fineſt birds, is at once their ornament and clothing, and the verdure which delights the ſenſes of man and beaſt, contributes to the nouriſhment and preſervation of both. In the works of literature, as of art, the ſame obſervation will obtain. The Bible is as much ſuperior to all the productions of finite underſtanding, as the man exceeds the ſtatue which is faſhioned from him, or the portrait which traces the reſemblance of his features and perſon. But, added he, ſitting down with a look of complacence, I am tinctured, you perceive, with the failings of old age, and continue talking when I ſhould be liſtening. My dear Mr. Worthington, you

will

will greatly oblige us all, if you will now favor us with your obſervations on this maſterly production, which does ſo much honour to your taſte as a Connoiſſeur.

Mr. Worthington bowed to his friend, and wiſhed he would extend his reflections; "for," continued he, "there is nothing more pleaſing or inſtructive than religious converſation, when the time and ſociety are conſiſtent with it. The ſame ſubjects are often differently treated by different perſons; and through the reciprocal communication of their ſeparate ideas, new lights are diſcovered, and much improvement may be made. From hearing the ſentiments of experience, the young may form a more correct idea of the temptations of life; and by ſtudying *living* models, may be incited to the nobleſt emulation. For my own part, I cannot but conſider the entire excluſion of ſerious topics, from the converſation

converſation of friends, and from domeſtic circles, as one cauſe of the declenſion of true piety. It ſeems as if we were aſhamed of a religion we are afraid to mention; and it is a real diſcouragement to the well-intentioned, not to obtain the countenance and ſupport of their elders and ſuperiors. Indeed," concluded he, with energy both of voice and manner, "ſuch characters as the reſpectable Mr. Wentworth, ſhould not decline the taſk of edifying their friends." The old gentleman ſmiled, and ſignificantly ſhaking his head, obſerved, that whatever reſpect might have been paid to the maxims of age by the ancients, the practice of the moderns would not accord with the advice of his friend. "Let us who are quitting the ſtage of life," ſaid he, "retire if poſſible, without diſguſting them that remain. Old people preach beſt by their *example*;

example; and a toothleſs orator has but little chance of obtaining attention."

"But are you quite excuſable, my good Sir," returned Mr. Worthington, "in conſulting the unobtruſive modeſty of your own temper, without conſidering the benefit your efforts might produce? Excuſe me, my worthy friend, yet this is too much the nature of mankind; and when we are diſpoſed to ſpare our exertions, we logically infer they would be unſucceſsful. I have not forgotten the advice you gave me many years ago; when I wiſhed to make a reform among ſome of my acquaintance, and pleaded the inſignificance of a ſingle example, you then anſwered my objections by a line from the poet you have juſt quoted; and in many ſucceeding circumſtances of difficulty, it has occurred to my mind, and ſtrengthened my reſolution.

"'Tis Man's to fight, but Heav'n's to give ſucceſs."

And

And I have frequently found, that the ſincere intention of doing good, has indeed been recompenced by an unexpected reward. How can we tell, if we decline the attempt to ſow the ſeeds of inſtruction, what fruit our endeavours might have produced. The particular inſtance I have mentioned, has probably never recurred to your recollection; and I had read before that line in the tranſlation of the Iliad, without obſervation; but the *time* and *manner* in which you then applied it, ſtruck me with uncommon force, and has often encouraged me ſince, in a moment of irreſolution. A ſlight hint, and even a random obſervation, has in temporal concerns ſtarted ideas from which the greateſt events have been matured; and why ſhould we let the children of this world, be always, in their generation, wiſer than the children of light?"—"Your remark," replied Mr. Wentworth, "carries

its

its own illuſtration: but as people commonly poſtpone the work of amendment to a more convenient ſeaſon, the preſent company will allow that I have a better title than can be uſually pleaded to this excuſe, when I again ſummon you to fulfil their expectations, by a comment on the piece which has excited our admiration."

Mr. Worthington, without further heſitation, complied with his friends requeſt; and after a previous intimation, that the text of ſcripture which ſerved as a motto to his reflections, would always be found in an ornamented compartment, at the bottom of the frame of each picture, began as follows.

"From the time of Saul's election to the kingdom of Iſrael, he had frequently ſhewn ſigns of a worldly ſpirit; and manifeſted in his conduct a degree of *partial* obedience to the commands of the LORD, entirely inconſiſtent with the faith of a true believer.

The

The ſervice of God is not a local employment, or an accidental obligation; but is always alike invariable and extenſive. We muſt bear this truth in our minds, while we retrace one of the capital facts which diſtinguiſhed the reign of the monarch in queſtion, or we ſhall be at a loſs to account for the ſituation in which he is placed in the picture before us. The event to which I now allude, was his not waiting, as he ought to have done, for the prophet Samuel, without whom he was not to offer ſacrifices and burnt-offerings. But Saul, whoſe affairs appeared be in a very urgent and diſtreſſing ſtate, and who was expoſed to the attack of the Philiſtines, and ſaw his people afraid of their enemies, and deſerting from his ſtandard, was ſo much alarmed after he had waited ſeven days, (the ſet time that Samuel had appointed on a former

occaſion *,) that " he ordered his ſervants to bring him a burnt-offering and peace-offering, and he offered the burnt-offering."— As ſoon as he had made an end of theſe oblations, Samuel came: and Saul went out to ſalute him. But the venerable prophet did not receive him with approbation; on the contrary, he enquired with evident diſpleaſure, " WHAT HAST THOU DONE?" Saul immediately informed him of the preceding circumſtances, concluding with this plauſible excuſe: " *The Philiſtines, ſaid I, will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made ſupplication unto the Lord: I forced myſelf therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.*" This appearance of zeal, did not, however, diſguiſe his fault from the eye of his inſpired friend, who told him, with much ſeverity, " *Thou haſt done fooliſhly: thou haſt not kept the commandment of*

* 1 Sam. x. 8.

the

the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have eſtabliſhed thy kingdom upon Iſrael for ever. But now thy kingdom ſhall not continue: the Lord hath ſought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, becauſe thou haſt not kept that which the Lord commanded thee *."

It is needful to revert to this tranſaction, becauſe from the date of it, we may trace the cauſe and period of Saul's rejection: and although at firſt ſight the crime appears but trivial, and to have proceeded from religious ardor; yet, it was certainly a high degree of diſobedience to the Moſaic inſtitution, which expreſsly forbad any of the laity to interfere in the prieſt's office; and therefore it was an act of great ſin and preſumption in the king to offer ſacrifices without Samuel, who appears to have offi-

* 1 Sam. xiii. 11, &c.

ciated as High Prieſt and Prophet, after the death of Eli and his ſons. It muſt be remembered, that the Hebrew nation was a theocracy, that is, Jehovah was properly king of Iſrael, and as ſuch, He directed all their affairs, both civil and military. The crime of the Iſraelites in demanding a king, is therefore ſaid by the Lord, to be a rejection of *his* government; and he tells Samuel, "*They have not rejected* THEE, (as a Ruler or Judge,) *but they have rejected* ME *that* I *ſhould not reign over them* *." And yet the election of their monarch did not really ſupercede their theocratical form of government, as he was ſtill but their chief magiſtrate and general, and was expreſsly ſtiled the *Captain of the Lord's Inheritance*. Saul's offence in not waiting for Samuel to offer ſacrifice, was therefore an act of treaſon againſt the KING OF KINGS,

* 1 Sam. viii. 7.

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the abſolute Sovereign of Iſrael; and, whatever it's pretence, could be regarded in no other light than as an open violation of his allegiance. An offence of the ſame ſacrilegious kind, and under the ſame pretended ſanction of honouring the LORD, Saul committed in ſparing Agag and the beſt of the ſpoil, when the Lord had devoted the whole nation of the Amalekites to deſtruction. But the memorable anſwer he received on that action, contained not only explicit direction for Saul, but an excellent leſſon of inſtruction for all ſucceeding ages: "*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacrifice, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams* *."

No action, however apparently meritorious, can be really valuable, that is not founded on upright principles; and no

* 1 Sam. xxviii.

motive can be ſtrictly virtuous, when it contradicts the declared will of God.

The conſequence of theſe breaches of duty in Saul, was the loſs of the Divine favour, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, which had been in an eſpecial manner vouchſafed to him upon his appointment to the regal dignity; a ſtrong proof that the gifts of grace, however illuſtrious or needful, will be diſcontinued, when not properly reſpected; and an awful warning againſt ſpiritual preſumption. Let us then beware of affecting to be wiſe above what is written, leſt we expoſe ourſelves to the ſnares of temptation, and like the king of Iſrael, forfeit the favour of Heaven.

It will be unneceſſary to comment on any further particulars in the life of Saul, till we come to the facts immediately preceding that ſingular event, on which the painter has ſo fortunately exerciſed his

ſkill;

ſkill; to the moral improvement of which, I think, the foregoing retroſpect will be found in ſome meaſure conducive.

The prophet Samuel, who had ever been a ſteady friend to this firſt ſovereign of Iſrael, whom he had himſelf anointed, and whoſe defection he always continued to lament, was now dead; and Saul experienced the want of his advice, in the hour of his diſtreſs and the indeciſion of his counſels.

In obedience to the law of God, and probably by the admonition of the departed Seer, he had exterminated all pretenders to forcery and divination from his kingdom. This was an act worthy of his character as the Father of his People, and the Captain of the Lord's Inheritance. But we have before obſerved, the virtue that is not founded on a firm principle of veneration to an omniſcient God, has no real ſtability;

and the ſame motive of perſonal accommodation, which, during the life of Samuel, engaged Saul's compliance with the divine injunction, ſo that "*he would not ſuffer a witch to live,*" was his inducement, in the perplexity of his circumſtances after the prophet's deceaſe, to countermand his own orders, and require his ſervants "*to ſeek him a woman that had a familiar ſpirit.*"

The armies of the Philiſtines were aſſembled againſt him, and he found himſelf on the eve of a deciſive battle, in circumſtances of uncommon peril and uncertainty. Through the errors and guilt of his former conduct, he had loſt the illumination of the Divine Spirit, and was expoſed to the inward ſuggeſtions of the ſpiritual adverſary, under whoſe malignant influence he had proceeded to the commiſſion of various deeds of outrage and oppreſſion towards his friends and ſubjects; by which means he

had

had alienated their affection, and filled his mind with all the horrors of ſuſpicion and miſtruſt. It is under theſe circumſtances, that the ſacred hiſtorian unveils the hidden perturbation of his ſoul, and preſents us with a ſtriking picture of the workings of a guilty breaſt. To outward appearance, Saul was ſtill a potent monarch; and although threatened with a ſucceſſor who would prevent the lineal deſcent of his crown, that formidable innovator was yet at a diſtance from him, and baniſhed by his power into ignominious exile; and he had ſtill under his command, that army, of which he had formerly been a ſucceſsful leader. But it is the property of evil actions to depreſs the intellectual powers; and if the arm of the ruffian does ſometimes perpetrate the violence of daring deeds, it is only through the impulſe of an immediate paſſion, which urges him on with momen-

tary fury, very different from the calm fortitude of rational and regular valour.

Saul is never before repreſented by the ſacred hiſtorian as a coward; yet we are now informed, "*When he ſaw the hoſt of the Philiſtines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.*"—If the ſentiments of religion are not entirely abandoned, they will always operate in the moment of danger; but the Almighty, though a merciful, is likewiſe a jealous God, and will not accept the heart which is offered as the ſervice of *convenience* only, or help and ſtrengthen *thoſe who diſhonour his holy law.* When, therefore, Saul in his exigence, "*enquired of the Lord, the Lord anſwered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.*" Thus ſeemingly abandoned to his fate, he was ſeized with all the agonies of deſpair; and finding no conſolation, either from the retroſpect of the

paſt,

paſt, or in the proſpect of the future, his perturbed thoughts reverted to the pious counſellor of his former years. As a prodigal ſpendthrift, having deſpiſed the affectionate advice of a ſolicitous parent, whoſe death his vices have accelerated, when he finds himſelf ſinking into the gulph of ruin, looks back with anguiſh, and vainly laments that he has neglected the friendly warning that might have preſerved him in affluence and peace; ſo the bewildered monarch, recollected with painful ſenſations of mournful regret, that Samuel would have been at this time an adequate adviſer in his calamitous ſituation. Jonathan was indeed in his camp, who was as nearly intereſted in Saul's concerns, as the cloſeſt bonds of conſanguinity could unite him, and would have been a very proper counſellor at this important criſis, for Jonathan was remarkable for prudence and activity: he had been bred

to arms, and now ſuſtained a ſtation of importance in the war, ſecond only to the monarch himſelf. But the evil ſpirit from the Lord, which was permitted to trouble Saul, beclouded his underſtanding, and probably repreſented the claims of filial duty, which Jonathan would naturally urge, as the obtruſive interference of ſedition and ſelf-intereſt. Jonathan was the friend of that champion of Iſrael, who was ordained to ſupercede Saul in its government: Saul, therefore, again reverted to Samuel—the *departed* Samuel, whoſe kindneſs he now mournfully remembered, and whoſe death precluded all temptation of jealouſy or miſtruſt.—The agents of malignity are ever ready to blow up the ſparks of temptation to a flame. The deſire of ſeeing Samuel, which the impoſſibility of its gratification, had reaſon been ſuffered to prevail, muſt have annihilated, at length kindled into

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an ardent wiſh, to bring up the Prophet from the dead, that he might conſult him through the aid of enchantment. When a fancy is once engendered in the brain, its progreſſion is inſtantaneous, and it is often matured in a moment. The haſty idea was communicated in words to his ſervants; and the ready obedience of venal attendants, the convenient ſnare of greatneſs, ſoon added new fuel to the forcible temptation.—"*And his ſervants ſaid unto him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar ſpirit at Endor.*"

What, then, had any new command abrogated the former law, by which Saul "*put away thoſe that had familiar ſpirits, and the wizards out of the land?*"—No! the *ſtatute* remained ſtill in its full force; but the *circumſtances of the king* were eſſentially altered. He had loſt the friendſhip of Samuel, and had forfeited the protection of Jehovah.

5 He

He had fullied the purity of his own mind by his tranſgreſſions, and was expoſed to the ſuggeſtions of evil imaginations, which removed all the obſtructions that a reverence to the Divine ordinance would have otherwiſe oppoſed to the act of diſobedience he was about to commit. God would not direct him by Urim, or by *living* prophets; but from the familiar ſpirit, he would require the return of a *dead* one, who might be more acquieſcent.

Men are eaſily determined to follow the line of conduct which accords with their favourite inclination. "*And Saul diſguiſed himſelf*;" he was before diveſted of the dignity of internal honour, and he now caſt off its external appearance. Reputation is often a ſubſtitute for real virtue; but even this badge of decency muſt be thrown aſide, before men become fit companions for the diſſolute, for witches, and familiar ſpirits.

ſpirits. "*And he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he ſaid, I pray thee divine unto me by the familiar ſpirit, and bring me him up whom I ſhall name unto thee. And the woman ſaid unto him, Behold, thou knoweſt what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off thoſe that have familiar ſpirits, and the wizards out of the land: wherefore then layeſt thou a ſnare for my life to cauſe me to die?*"—Had not the ſenſe of religion been quite abſorbed in the anxiety of temporal ſolicitude, the woman's queſtion muſt have kindled the bluſhes of ſhame on the conſcious cheek of the recreant monarch, and would have awakened the ſtings of remorſe even in the very act of guilt. But perſeverance in wickedneſs hardens the heart; and Saul ſwore to her, not by *the life of a king*, for he was diſguiſed, and the king was the ſuppoſed enemy of wicked enchantment; but, "*by the* LORD, ſaying,

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As the Lord liveth, there ſhall no puniſhment happen to thee for this thing." Thus do the wicked, in their moſt flagitious actions, bear unintentional witneſs to the exiſtence of the Deity, and admit the ſanctions of religion, even while they deny its authority. The compacts of the vileſt miſcreants, have no bond of ſufficient confirmation, but the ratification of an oath; and the wretched parties appeal to God's Omniſcience, to certify a promiſe, even where the performance of it muſt be, as in the caſe of Saul and the Witch of Endor, a direct violation of his poſitive precepts. Such is the glaring inconſiſtency which ariſes from the practice of impiety!—The degenerate king dared to revoke his own edicts, and to aſſure the partner of his divination, that ſhe ſhould be fully indemnified. But let the greateſt potentates remember in their moſt ſecret tranſactions, that " One higher than the higheſt

higheſt regardeth," who can eaſily invalidate their promiſes of ſecurity; and who, when they have preſumptuouſly averred, that no puniſhment ſhall happen to the abettors of their vices, will at once include the guilty principal, with the inferior agents in the ſame condemnation and vengeance.

The Supreme Power was now preparing an equal ſurprize both for Saul and his vile aſſociate; and confounded their ſecret act of rebellion, by the very means they made uſe of to defy his ſupremacy. What was the nature of thoſe magic arts which the ancient idolaters practiſed, we have no information. That the influence of evil ſpirits had ſome temporary prevalence, before the coming of Chriſt, ſeems to be generally allowed: but however that might be, they were then, as now, under the entire reſtraint of the Divine government,

and

and could exerciſe no power, either to tempt or to annoy, but what was permitted them from above: and thoſe only were expoſed to their evil machinations, who willingly became the ſervants of ſin. Saul was, in the preſent caſe, in a ſituation of imminent hazard. His mind was confuſed with a thouſand foreboding apprehenſions. He ſaw before him the numerous army of Philiſtia. He was conſcious of the diſaffection of his people. He had injured many perſons, and conſequently had many ſecret as well as open foes. He had ſhamefully perſecuted his ſon-in-law, David who was entertained by Achiſh, one of the princes in league againſt him. What then, it may be ſaid, could he have done? He had applied to the ordinary means of grace; but they had failed him in his neceſſity. No inſpiring dreams ſuggeſted expedients of deliverance from impending danger; the

prophets

prophets were all dumb, the Urim was ſilent, the dark night was arrived, and his fears increaſed its gloomy̅ ſolemnity. The hours ſped on their rapid march, and the riſing morn would preſent to him his embattled and implacable enemies, ready for their intended attack. If there was any truth in witchcraft, might he not for once avail himſelf of its aſſiſtance? He was diſguiſed and could not be known. His companions and the woman, all equally guilty, would, for their own ſakes, be afraid to betray his ſecret; and if ſhe was really impotent of power to raiſe the dead Prophet, he could return unobſerved to his tent, and could but continue in his former ſtate.— Such reaſoning as this, we may ſuppoſe, to have fixed his determination; and when the woman enquired who ſhe ſhould bring up, he ſaid, "*Bring me up Samuel.*" Impreſſed by a ſupernatural force, whoſe

energy

energy ſhe had never before experienced, and ſeeing the viſion of which ſhe had no expectation, the woman cried with a loud voice, and with terrified lamentations reproached the king for his deception, "*Why haſt thou deceived me? for thou art Saul?*" Whether the king's emotions betrayed his rank, or the appearance of Samuel in any manner intimated the circumſtance, is not related. The indication that ſomething unuſual had occurred to this prieſteſs of idolatry, gave a momentary ſuffuſion of joy to the agitated monarch, and he eagerly "*ſaid unto her, Be not afraid, for what ſaweſt thou? And the woman ſaid unto Saul, I ſaw Gods aſcending out of the earth. And he ſaid unto her, What form is he of? And ſhe ſaid, an old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel; and he ſtooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himſelf.*"

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The art of painting may be here more ſucceſsful than the pen of deſcription, for no combination of words can fully convey the tumultuary ſenſations that muſt have agitated the boſom of Saul at ſuch a meeting. He was once more in the preſence of the friend whoſe death he had deplored: the means he had employed to procure this awful interview, were not indeed to be juſtified; but ſucceſs ſeems to have ſanctioned the meaſure, and the viſion of Samuel ſtood before him. The countenance of the Prophet on this ſolemn return from the manſions of the dead, did not, however, wear an encouraging aſpect, and the trembling king waited, in ſilence, the ſolemn reſult of the dreadful conference.—" *And Samuel ſaid to Saul, Why haſt thou diſquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul anſwered, I am ſore diſtreſſed: for the Philiſtines make war againſt me, and God is departed from me,*

and

and anſwereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayeſt make known unto me what I ſhall do. Then ſaid Samuel, Wherefore then doſt thou aſk me, ſeeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?" The viſionary being then proceeds to recapitulate the judgments he had formerly denounced, when the offences were committed for which Saul was excluded from the kingdom: and after predicting that the Philiſtines would be certainly victorious in the enſuing engagement, he concluded his melancholy diſcourſe by this awful denunciation: "*And to-morrow ſhalt thou and thy ſons be with me: the Lord alſo ſhall deliver the hoſt of Iſrael into the hands of the Philiſtines.*"

We may truly ſay, that "*the triumphing of the wicked is but ſhort, and their joy is but for a moment.*" The ſchemes of Saul had

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ſucceeded, and his communication with the emiſſaries of darkneſs, had obtained the deſire of his heart; but they had neither reſtored his tranquility, nor abated his fears. "*Then Saul fell ſtraightway all along upon the earth, and was ſore afraid, becauſe of the words of Samuel.*" His worſt apprehenſions were now confirmed, and every ſoul-harrowing image of deſpair was aſſembled to ſubdue his courage and complete his confuſion. The news he had heard, aſſailed every feeling of his heart, as a man, as a father, and as a king. To himſelf, it was the ſentence of condemnation, and the knell of death. To his ſons, the declaration was equally a mortal ſummons; and to his ſoldiers and ſubjects, it announced the tidings of ſlaughter and defeat. Theſe are the wages of iniquity, and the compenſations for loſt integrity. Well might he afterwards refuſe the conſolation

lation and ſuſtenance, preſented by thoſe about him, when offered from ſuch hands, and in ſuch circumſtances. His attendants might indeed compel him to accept the latter, but it exceeded their ability to adminiſter the former. "*Then they roſe up,*" from the mournful banquet, "*and went away that night.*"—Thus ends the melancholy digreſſion of the hiſtorian, and leaves Saul to purſue his ſolitary courſe through the ſhades of darkneſs, encompaſſed with a deeper gloom within, than what ſurrounded him from without.

Having now cloſed the narrative of this ſecret expedition, let us conſider the conduct of Saul with a view to our own inſtruction.

It muſt be acknowledged, that the proſpect of his affairs was ſufficient to apologiſe for his dejection, though not to juſtify the means he had recourſe to in order to allay its violence.

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The heavieſt depreſſion of mind, ariſes from a ſenſe of ill deſert, and the evils and ſufferings of Saul were entirely the conſequence of his own follies. He had been ſelected from his brethren, and choſen to be the king of Iſrael, at which time he was diſtinguiſhed for the practice of humility and other virtues; had he perſevered in a courſe of obedience to the commands of God, his warlike ſucceſſes would have been continued, and his proſperity and family peace confirmed. But when by the indulgence of rancorous paſſions, he prepared his mind to receive the influence of evil ſpirits, he gradually threw off the ſenſe of Divine government; and though he ſtill retained the *form of godlineſs*, he was no longer actuated by its *power*.

When men have, by their vices, deeply plunged themſelves in miſery, they ſeldom retain ſufficient diſcernment to recover the

right path. The Almighty will never entirely abandon a ſincere penitent. As a puniſhment for former negligence and contempt, he may for a time be left to himſelf, and his ſupplications may ſeem to be in vain; but this is only a trial of his ſincerity, and ſhould therefore incite the petitioner to renew his entreaties at the throne of grace with encreaſing ardor and perſeverance, but on no account to apply to the enemies of the Deity for relief. The powers of darkneſs are never *willing*, and can never be *able*, to aſſiſt the children of God: and to pry into the hidden myſteries of the Divine government by forbidden means, if it *could* procure us the deſired information, would but add to our perplexity, without affording us relief. Had Saul reiterated his addreſſes to the throne of grace, the clemency of the Almighty might have vouchſafed him an anſwer of peace,

peace, or would at leaſt have ſoothed the diſtraction of his mind, by calming its tumultuous agitations. But by adding ſin to ſin, and ſeeking counſel from idolatrous agents, what could he hope, but to confirm the diſpleaſure of Heaven, and make Omnipotence his foe: "for who has ever reſiſted God, and has proſpered?"—Before his emigration from the camp, a ray of hope might have occaſionally armed his breaſt with fortitude, and ſuggeſted the probability of victory to encourage his reſiſtance: but after his return from the direful interview, no omens of ſucceſs, no poſſibility of conqueſt, could inſpire the expectation of good. Deſpair muſt have brooded on his helmet, and with its leaden weight, have ſunk the courage of the ſoldier, and the ſpirits of the man, while in every conteſt on the hoſtile field, the ſummons of death muſt have purſued his imagination,

and the tremendous ſound, of "*this day ſhalt thou and thy ſons be with me*," have confounded his reflections and unnerved his arm.

Whatever may be the appearance of our fate, let us remember that our ſafety muſt conſiſt in the ſupport of Heaven: for while we continue in the way of duty, we may come boldly to the footſtool of the Almighty, and ſeek his aid and direction.

The deeper the gloom of adverſity, and the more intricate our path appears, the more fervently muſt we implore the help of God to lighten our darkneſs, and diſpel the ſhadow of uncertainty. But ſtill we muſt wait for relief with patience: muſt *truſt in the Lord and be doing good*; for we may be aſſured, that in the end "*the hope of the righteous ſhall not fail*;" and that if we ſubmiſſively "*tarry the Lord's leiſure*," we

ſhall

ſhall in the event "*be ſtrong, for he will comfort our heart.*"

If, on the contrary, we employ any illicit means, which promiſe a more ſpeedy extrication from diſtreſs, we exclude ourſelves from the circle of Divine protection, and enter the confines of his adverſary's influence. Not that any place, or power, can exclude or reſiſt the Deity; but when we willingly league with wicked men, or wicked ſpirits, and apply to unlawful means for deliverance, it is ſuch an evident renunciation of God's authority, that we ſurely cannot expect he will exert it for our reſcue.

The man, who in ſeaſons of diſtreſs, inſtead of ſhewing increaſed aſſiduity in buſineſs, and continual fervor in prayer, will ſeek for an alleviation of his trouble in the ſociety of the prophane, or try to drown his cares in the cup of intoxication,

muſt never hope that the *goodneſs* of God will be exerted to *conſole* his affliction, or his *providence* to *remove* it.

Nor muſt thoſe who have *loſt* a fortune, expect to *retrieve* it by illegal courſes, or hope the bleſſing of Heaven will proſper their deſigns: for we are commanded to follow the inſtructions of the Word of Truth, which forbid all duplicity of conduct, and unwarrantable engagements; and the voice of conſcience, if not ſtifled by prejudice, will direct us in the right way, and tell us that we ought to walk in it, and neither turn to the right hand or the left, if we would keep our feet from evil.

But to thoſe who through the viciſſitudes of life unalterably perſevere in well-doing, the worſt accidents of it can carry no real cauſe of deſpondence; for the defeat of worldly ſchemes will never affect their beſt intereſts: and if it ſhould pleaſe God to

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ſummon them, either by the ſtroke of ſudden caſualty, or the ſlow progreſs of natural decay, to the regions of immortality, they may receive the mandate of their diſmiſſion without diſmay; aſſured that in both worlds THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT *equally reigneth, and will be the ſtrength of the righteous, and their portion for ever.*

As ſoon as Mr. Worthington left off reading, he received the general thanks of the company; farmer Hind declared himſelf to be very much edified, and that he thought what had been ſaid was as good as a *ſermon at church.*—" Ah, Gentlemen!" continued he, " you that have had the advantage of ſuch *fine* learning, ought to be more *righteous* than the reſt of the world. If ignorant people ſin, though they have a ſomething within them that ſays, *you ſhould not do ſo*; though mayhap they may re-

member their Catechiſm, and ſo recollect the Ten Commandments; yet that is very different from having a reaſon for every thing at their fingers' ends, as one may ſay: therefore, if the *poor* are puniſhed for their wickedneſs, the Lord have mercy on their *betters!*"—The younger part of the audience could ſcarcely refrain from ſmiling at the honeſt zeal with which the above ſentiments were delivered; and ſir Lewes Mandeville, with an accent bordering on contempt, took notice, "that the worthy farmer had very cautiouſly worded the concluſion of his ſpeech, by ſubſtituting the word *betters*, where that of *rich* would have been more natural; for had he ſaid, if the *poor* are puniſhed, the Lord have mercy on the *rich*, nobody could have ſuppoſed farmer Hind would have been excepted from that deſcription of people." Mr. Wentworth, and ſeveral others of the party, looked

diſpleaſed

diſpleaſed at this quibbling remark; and Mrs. Mitford perceiving an indignant glow on her huſband's animated countenance, as he was preparing to ſpeak, endeavoured mildly to prevent him, by aſking a queſtion which ſhe hoped would change the ſubject of converſation.

"You mentioned, my dear ſir," ſaid ſhe, addreſſing Mr. Worthington, "that Saul prepared his mind for the reception of evil ſpirits, pray what is your opinion of them, and of Saul's malady?"—"You have put your queries, my good lady," replied Mr. Worthington, "with leſs preciſion than uſual; but if you mean to enquire whether I believe in the exiſtence of evil ſpirits, I certainly do; though I know it is faſhionable at preſent, to exclude a Devil as well as a Divinity from the modern creed, and thus leave mankind at liberty to purſue their inventions, unmoleſted by fear of the

one, or reverence towards the other. That the power of evil ſpirits was much greater before the coming of Jeſus Chriſt, and at the time of his appearance, than it has ſince been, is, in my opinion, no inconſiderable proof of the truth of our religion, for the reſtraint which theſe malignant beings are now under, may be regarded as the beginning of the accompliſhment of thoſe predictions in Sacred Writ, which threaten the deſtruction of Satan, by the death of the Meſſiah. With reſpect to the other clauſe of your enquiry, I believe it is generally thought, that Saul's diſeaſe was a ſpecies of melancholy, which is certainly much encreaſed by violent emotions and ſtrong paſſions of the mind; and it was probably ſimilar to what is in the Goſpels called *being poſſeſſed with a devil*; the preciſe nature of which it is impoſſible, in the preſent ſtate of the world, to aſcertain."

Mr. Wor-

Mr. Worthington was liſtened to with great attention, and every one wiſhed him to proceed; but the carriages belonging to ſeveral of the company having been announced, and the diſtance they were from home, making it neceſſary to obey the ſummons, they reluctantly ſeparated, and reſpectively retired, thanking their hoſpitable Neighbour for his entertainment, and repeating their deſire that the readings in the picture gallery might be continued.

PAINTING, No. 2.

The Death of Aaron.

From Numbers, Chap. xx. 28.

And Moſes ſtripped Aaron of his Garments, and put them upon Eleazar his Son; and Aaron died there upon the Top of the Mount: and Moſes and Eleazar came down from the Mount.

THE ſuperior ſtyle, and maſterly execution of the ſcene of Aaron's death, ſhewed it to have been drawn by the ſame hand as the foregoing picture: for which reaſon it was voted, by general conſent, as the

the next painting that ſhould be conſidered. In the manly, firm, and dignified countenance of Moſes were repreſented the moſt perfect expreſſions of ſympathy, affection, and concern; while a greater degree of ſorrow was apparent in the more agitated looks of Eleazar, who ſeemed to watch, with filial anxiety, the compoſed and pious ſolemnity marked on the features of his dying father.

Had not theſe intereſting figures attracted the firſt attention of the ſuſceptible mind, the beautiful ſcenery of the piece muſt have excited its warmeſt approbation.

The extenſive proſpect of the country, from the elevation of Mount Hor, with the view of the camp of Iſrael, extending in the vale beneath, afforded ſcope for the exertion of unrivalled talents.

A younger ſon of Mr. Northcote, who was particularly pleaſed with the appearance

of Moſes, begged to be informed, why that great lawgiver was always diſtinguiſhed by ſomething like *horns* iſſuing from his head. Mr. Worthington replied, that the ambiguity of ſome words in the Hebrew had often been the occaſion of miſtakes. *Caran*, in that language, ſignifies *to ſhoot out with horns*, or *to caſt rays about like horns*; and interpreters have followed the firſt ſenſe, in ſpeaking of Moſes when he came down from the mountain: and painters from them have drawn him with horns, inſtead of thoſe *rays of light* which appeared over his head, and with which the eyes of the ſpectators were dazzled*. I think, ſaid Mrs. Thornby, St. Paul very clearly expreſſes the meaning you have given; and the words I allude to will be found in the third chapter of his ſecond Epiſtle to the

* See on this ſubject, Bundy's tranſlation of Father Lamy's Introduction to the Holy Scriptures.

Corinthians:

Corinthians: "*the children of Iſrael could not ſtedfaſtly behold the face of Moſes, for the glory of his countenance.*" The ſubſequent verſes contain an admirable compariſon between the miniſters of the law and the goſpel; from which the Apoſtle deduces the excellence of the latter, and the whole paſſage is, in my opinion, remarkably impreſſive.

Mr. Worthington approved of the remark, and further obſerved, that though the reflections he ſhould have the honour to read on the death of the firſt jewiſh high prieſt had been the ſelected ſubject, he was aware of its inferiority when compared with that of the death of Chriſt, the great Chriſtian High Prieſt; who, not for his own ſins, but for the ſins of the people, ſubmitted to be ſtripped of his garments, and aſcend Mount Calvary, in order to endure a cruel death; of which Aaron's might properly

be

be conſidered as a type; but he had not, he ſaid, treated it as ſuch in his remarks, or given that ſolemn turn to the diſcourſe it would have well admitted. Theſe little productions, he added, were intended rather as *moral*, than as purely *religious* eſſays; the latter might be found in a work which was beyond all praiſe, he meant *Robinſon's Scripture Characters*, of which, though he had not availed himſelf, nor indeed had ever ſeen them when he wrote his Sacred Exhibition, he could not ſpeak too highly, or too ſtrongly recommend to the peruſal of his friends.

Henry Northcote, a fine intelligent boy, about fifteen years of age, the ſame who had already ſpoken, ſtill continued to examine the painting. He was educated at an eminent grammar ſchool, and was tolerably ſkilled in the claſſics; but as neither at ſchool or at home much care had been

been taken to impreſs his mind with ſacred knowledge, he was in that reſpect miſerably defective. As ſoon, therefore, as he could without rudeneſs aſk the queſtion, he deſired to know whether any body could tell him what that fine ornament was upon Aaron's breaſt. Why, you great blockhead! ſaid his father, it is the high prieſt's breaſt plate, to be ſure. What did you think it was? I really could not tell, ſir, replied the youth, and I have been conſidering it ſome time before I took the liberty to enquire. It is a good ſign in young perſons, encouragingly added Mr. Worthington, when they manifeſt a proper degree of curioſity about things that are curious or edifying; but, my dear Henry, have you forgotten what is contained in the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus, where Aaron's garments are particularly deſcribed? I do not recollect, ſaid Henry, having ever read them;

and

and if I have heard any thing of the ſort, it muſt have been ſome Sunday at church, for I never went regularly through either of theſe books. Mrs. Mitford, touching his elbow as he ſtood next her, ſmilingly told him, that this chapter of the Old Teſtament, which deſcribed the dreſs of the prieſts, &c. was not included in the leſſons appointed by the rubric, and therefore he could not have heard it at church. In that caſe you are certainly right, madam, returned he, and if Mr. Worthington would be kind enough to explain the meaning of the breaſt plate, and why it appears ſo beſtuck with jewels, I ſhould be much obliged to him. Mr. Northcote blamed this freedom, as an interruption to the general converſation, and highly reprobated the ignorance which it betrayed; but Mr. Worthington aſſured him that he ſhould feel great pleaſure in

ſatisfying

ſatisfying the enquiry. It is to be lamented, ſaid he, that while other branches of learning are attended to in our public ſeminaries, the inſtruction of youth, in the more important ſtudy of religion, is often ſhamefully neglected; and yet education muſt be incomplete in its moſt eſſential part, if the literature of the ſcholar, and the accompliſhments of the gentleman, are not crowned with the knowledge, faith, and piety of the chriſtian. Then turning to the picture, he pointed out to Henry Northcote the particular parts of Aaron's habit, as it was there delineated; lowering his voice that he might not interrupt the reſt of the company, till he perceived that every one was attending his diſcourſe, in the wiſh to ſhare the information. He then, after making his young diſciple read aloud that part of the 28th chapter of Exodus above referred to, thus went on.—Upon

the

the border of that purple garment, which you ſee comes down almoſt to his feet, are ſuppoſed to hang the ſeventy-two bells, and as many pomegranates; and under it is the linen tunic, or embroidered coat which was worn by all the prieſts, as well as the high prieſt, reaching down to the ground. The other garment, like a waiſtcoat without ſleeves, is the ephod; and thoſe things in the painting reſembling buttons on the ſhoulders are deſigned to repreſent the precious ſtones, in each of which were the names of the children of Iſrael: in that on the right ſhoulder were the names of the ſix eldeſt, and in the left thoſe of the ſix youngeſt. The *breaſt-plate* is ſo called, becauſe it was worn upon the breaſt, and this contained the *Urim* and *Thummin*, which Mr. Wentworth ſaid was a ſort of oracle, by which the will of God was made known to the high prieſt, but many people differed

about

about the *matter* of them, and the *manner* of God's giving anſwers by them. Mr. Worthington ſuppoſed it a miſtake to confound the *Urim* and *Thummin* together, and quoted for his authority the learned Mr. Mede, to whom it ſeemed, that *Urim* was that whereby God gave anſwer to thoſe who conſulted him in difficult caſes; and *Thummin* that whereby the high prieſt knew whether God did accept the ſacrifice or no; and that therefore the former was called *light*, and the latter *perfection*, and he believed both were in uſe among the patriarchs. Mr. Worthington then being requeſted to read his manuſcript, he began as follows.

The ſerious thought of death is always awful. The beſt of men are conſcious of ſo many imperfections, that the idea of their appearance before the tribunal of Heaven, muſt occaſion ſolicitude and alarm. To the jewiſh high prieſt, it was attended with one peculiar circum-

circumſtance of mortification and regret; the hour of his diſſolution being haſtened in its approach, as the penal forfeit of a former tranſgreſſion. To his brother Moſes, who had been the aſſociate of his crime, this melancholy ſolemnity muſt have combined the ſentiments of contrition with the feelings of grief; and to Eleazar, who was now to be inveſted with the ſacred honours of his departing anceſtor, it could not but convey a degree of anxious fear, leſt he ſhould hereafter fail in the diſcharge of his pontifical office.

In a haſty or careleſs peruſal of this ſhort account of the death of Aaron, we are not ſtruck with the important inſtruction which its recital is intended to convey. The dictates of the ſpirit of truth, muſt be read with the ſpirit of *underſtanding* to be comprehended with advantage; the ſtores of ſacred inſtruction muſt be patiently explored,

plored, before their intrinſic value can be underſtood.

When we recollect the meek and placid temper of Moſes, and the diſintereſted and generous patriotiſm which diſtinguiſhed his character, together with the ſeveral inſtances of forbearance and interceſſion that occur in the hiſtory of his life, we cannot but ſuppoſe, that his heart was animated with the moſt affectionate regards of fraternal love; and that the divine order to prepare for the death of Aaron, and to be preſent at it, muſt have been a ſevere trial of his tenderneſs, as well as of his fortitude and reſignation. Yet great as we may imagine the trial to have been, Moſes ſuſtained it without a murmur: and Aaron ſubmitted to the appointment of heaven, with the ſame reverence as he ſhewed on a former occaſion, when on the death of his ſons, by an awful judgment, "*he held his peace.*"

But

But the ſentence, which announced this deciſive ſtroke of affliction, was further aggravated to the deſcendants of Levi, by the divine rebuke and diſpleaſure with which it was accompanied. " *And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coaſt of the land of Edom, ſaying, Aaron ſhall be gathered unto his people.*" This was no more than the warning of diſſolution, of which a good man is always in expectation, and always in ſome meaſure prepared for; but to this ſolemn ſentence was added an awful denunciation, accompanied by a ſevere reproach, which encreaſed its poignancy; " *For he ſhall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Iſrael, becauſe ye rebelled againſt my word at the water of Meribah.*" " *Take Aaron and Eleazar his ſon, and bring them into Mount Hor. And ſtrip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his ſon: and Aaron ſhall*

ſhall be gathered unto his people, and ſhall die there. And Moſes did *as the Lord* commanded." And in ſo doing what an example has he left to ſucceeding ages!

This great legiſlator, this favored ſervant of the Moſt High, who had ſpent his life in laborious ſervices, and whoſe abilities were ſo indefatigably exerciſed for the people of Jehovah, by whoſe murmuring alone he had been provoked to "ſpeak unadviſedly with his lips;" does it not appear like a ſevere puniſhment, that his hopes ſhould be diſappointed in the end? That after he and his brother Aaron, had for ſo many years been united in the ſame cauſe, and were now arrived in view of the accompliſhment of their hopes, and in the confines and even in *ſight* of the promiſed land, the expected recompence of all their toils, they muſt reſign the joy and glory of introducing to it, the nation they had ſo

long conducted? Surely it ſeems a rigid decree, that theſe auguſt characters ſhould be required to leave the congregation, and aſcend in its ſight, like criminals to await the execution of their ſentence! Such reaſonings as theſe may find place in the hearts of the worldly, the ſelf-ſufficient, and the vain; they may complain of the ſeverity of God's diſpenſations, when he diſappoints their wiſhes, or chaſtiſes their ſins; but his prophet and his prieſt, acted on different principles; and with the aſſurance of divine equity, and an entire acquieſcence in its deſtination, they *meekly* "did as the Lord commanded:" confident that in ſo doing, they ſhould not loſe their reward.

It has often been a ſubject of ſpeculation, whether the knowledge of the exact time of our deceaſe, would, on the whole, prove a bleſſing, or the reverſe. There is one reaſon which ſhould certainly reconcile the

mind

mind to the preſent ſtate of things; that had it not been decidedly moſt advantageous for the human race, a different conſtitution would have taken place: for as the wiſdom of the Deity cannot miſtake in the appointment, ſo his power is equally unlimited in the execution of his deſigns; and therefore, no motive but their perfect excellence and conſiſtency, can be the cauſe of their continuance.

There is the greateſt reaſon to ſuppoſe, from the nature of mankind, that if each particular perſon knew the exact moment of his exit from this world, the concerns of it would be neglected, and a total ſubverſion of affairs would enſue. For, in thoſe who had the proſpect but of a ſhort continuance upon earth, the ardour of expectation might be ſubdued, and the ſprings of action relaxed; while to others, who could aſcertain that their mortal exiſtence

muſt be of long duration, it might occaſionally produce the ſtrongeſt temptation either to preſumption or deſpair. So that however philoſophically we may debate the queſtion, there is evidently one deduction; that if Providence withholds the knowledge of our fate, or for ſome wiſe, though inſcrutable reaſon, ſees fit to reveal it, in either caſe, while events are directed by infinite wiſdom, we may fairly conclude,

"Whatever is, is right."

As the Iſraelites acted under the eſpecial guidance of God, the interference of his commands, and the execution of his judgments were on many occaſions immediate: and thoſe events which would otherwiſe have taken place in the common courſe of nature, were often made ſubſervient to the higheſt purpoſes of moral government, by being accompliſhed in a miraculous way.

Thus,

Thus, the death of Aaron, which in the uſual courſe of life muſt have been ſoon expected to enſue from the weakneſs of declining age, was here made a ſtanding memorial to the end of time, of God's diſpleaſure againſt diſobedience to his commands, and of his impartial juſtice in the puniſhment of thoſe who ſo offend. Nor had this eminent perſon himſelf any cauſe of complaint, while he became a uſeful monument for the edification of others.

Aaron probably experienced very ſtrong emotions of regret, when he heard the decree which announced his approaching end. The ideas of ſeparation from every connection that was dear to his heart, of the *laſt farewell* to all the objects of nature, of the ſevere pangs of diſſolution, were doubtleſs diſtreſſing to him. But ſtill, theſe tender relentings of ſenſibility, are what moſt men muſt experience,

who expire on the bed of languiſhing, and are ſenſible of thoſe mortal ſymptoms, which precede the final ſtruggles of nature. If Aaron, who was called to aſcend Mount Hor in perfect health, may be ſuppoſed to have been more ſuſceptible of the impreſſions of tenderneſs, and more awake to all the natural deſires of life, than ſuch as ſink into the grave the exhauſted victims of diſeaſe; yet, it muſt be remembered, that though the latter have leſs appetite remaining for earthly enjoyments, they are alſo leſs capable of intellectual fortitude, when the preſſure of ſevere indiſpoſition benumbs the faculties of the ſoul. When the conflict of leaving every other terreſtrial tie was over, and the Patriarch had ſettled his temporal concerns, with what a mixture of ſerenity and grief muſt he have aſcended the Mount, from whoſe aſpiring top, the wide proſpect of Iſrael's future journeys, and future conqueſts were

were deſcried, till the diſtant view of the Dead Sea bounded the wide horizon, by ſeemingly uniting itſelf with the blue expanſe.

This indiſtinct ſight of the promiſed land, muſt have awakened in Aaron's mind, the ſerious ſentiments of repentance, for having loſt the privilege of a nearer approach to it. At the ſame time, the hope of a ſpeedy entrance into a "*better country*," ſoftened his regret and compoſed him to a ſerene acquieſcence, till all the objects of ſenſe faded in the mental eye, like the firſt ſhadows of the fartheſt proſpect, and were at length entirely loſt in the brighter viſions of immortality.

If the ſupports of friendſhip and domeſtic affection, are invigorating reſources through the courſe of life, their ſoothing endearments muſt be deemed equally comfortable at its concluſion; eſpecially when the

objects of our esteem, are like Aaron's relatives, carried to that state of maturity and independence, as not to lose with us the natural protection and provision of their future years. The intercourse of pious persons is always a mutual benefit. Moses and Eleazar may be supposed to have strengthened the faith of Aaron by the consolations they were qualified to bestow, and the aspiring energy of mutual prayer; while the animated fortitude and humble confidence of the expiring saint, repaid the sacred debt of edification to his attending friends.

What different comforters must such associates be found, when we expect the approach of death, to the Witch of Endor and the servants of Saul! Surely whatever is our opinion of religion while we mix in the tumult of the world, we must at least join in the wish, of "*dying the death of the righteous,*

righteous, and that our laſt end may be like his." Let us likewiſe learn the difference of obtaining the knowledge of future events from the fountain of Divine Revelation, or receiving our information from the myſteries of iniquity; ſince in the one caſe, God will ſuit his aſſiſtance to our neceſſities; and if we muſt be ſtripped of theſe garments of fleſh, he will command his *ſervants* to do it for us with a gentle hand, and not ſuffer our Philiſtine enemies to tear them off like Saul's armour, with the indifference of unrelenting hatred.

Some perſons, in the exceſs of their ſenſibility, may think that God might have ſupplied to Aaron the aſſiſtance of his friends, and by ſuffering him (as his ſervant Moſes did afterwards) to aſcend the mountain by himſelf, might have ſpared their tenderneſs ſo affecting a trial. But "*the ways of the Almighty are not like our ways,*

nor his thoughts like ourth oughts." God's actions are never the result of weak indulgence, or capricious inconsideration; and when the purposes of his providence can be as well answered by the ministration of his creatures, it is always consistent with his comprehensive plans of administration, to assist one being by exercising the virtues of another. For certainly had it been agreeable to the Divine will, Moses could as easily have invested Eleazar with the paraphernalia of the priesthood, as he had formerly done his father; but then that father's admonition would have been wanting, and his last injunction and dying benediction unheard: and although the Scriptures have not recorded them, who can doubt their edifying purport, to strengthen and confirm the conduct of the new elected Pontiff, whose resolutions would acquire fresh force, in the future discharge of his important

office,

office, from the affectionate remembrance of the parent who gave them. Nor was any danger to be apprehended from the knowledge in what place Aaron's remains were depoſited; as Moſes, his great ſuperior, was yet alive, and would certainly reſtrain the people from offering to them undue honours, a circumſtance, which it is imagined, precluded the Jewiſh Lawgiver himſelf from receiving any human attendance at the time of his own deceaſe.

What various points of inſtruction, therefore, does this ſingle picture communicate! It teaches the diſcharge of our reſpective duties, whether public, ſocial, or private. It points out to us the behaviour of true penitents under the conviction of guilt, as quietly ſubmitting to the rod of correction, and doing as the Lord commands, without oppoſition: while it comforts the dejected mourner with the hope of future acceptance

with God; ſince though Moſes and Aaron "*angered him at the waters of ſtrife*," yet they were unqueſtionably two of his moſt favoured ſervants; and therefore, if the ſinner repents of his tranſgreſſions as faithfully as they did, the mercy which pardoned them, will alſo forgive him. To the hardened and impenitent heart, it ſpeaks a different language, and ſhews the awful terrors of Divine juſtice, that no ſuperiority of intellect, or eloquence of ſpeech, or princely dignity, or ſacred function, or even *former virtues*, will excuſe an action that is really blameable, or ſanctify an irreligious deed. And to all mankind it proclaims this ſerious truth; that to *die eaſily* we muſt *live righteouſly*, and that "*the ſting of death is ſin*," though "*thanks be to God, He now giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*"

Theſe

Theſe are ſome of the uſeful reflections which this portion of Sacred Hiſtory affords; but there are alſo others which deſerve our notice. We are here reminded of the duties of friendſhip, and are taught that higheſt point of reſolution, to ſacrifice our own indulgence, to the circumſtances of thoſe who have a claim on our attention, and to accompany them when requiſite to ſcenes of ſadneſs, and even to the confines of the grave. It likewiſe ſuggeſts a leſſon of the deepeſt import to ſuch as are appointed to the work of the miniſtry; that they ſhould previouſly ſeparate themſelves from the congregation of their fellow-creatures, and from worldly cares, and prepare for their ſacred function by ſolitary meditation and prayer. Such perſons ſhould farther conſider the example of their predeceſſor in the paſtoral office, with a view to the regulation of their own conduct;

that they may be enabled to follow his ſteps in the path of duty, or to avoid his miſcarriages where he deviated from the right way. And laſtly, it behoves them to remember, that the ceremony of conſecration, is not merely the inveſtiture with the outward garments of the prieſthood, but it is a ſolemn conſecration of themſelves to the ſervice of God, and that unleſs they retain the "*breaſt-plate of righteouſneſs*," cloſe girded to their hearts, the Urim within it of the Holy Spirit will be no oracle to them.

Above all, the account of Aaron's death reminds us, that after the various and fatiguing journeyings of life, we muſt each one at length "*be gathered unto our fathers:*" and when we reflect how many great and good men have gone the ſame way before us, let it diſſipate our apprehenſions of the fatal ſtroke; ſince, if we are called to follow them, and quit our tendereſt

tendereſt connections, a very ſhort time only will intervene, before they likewiſe will go the way of all fleſh.

And let thoſe mournful ſurvivors, who are obliged, like Moſes and Eleazar, to come down from the Mount, and leave the remains of a beloved Aaron behind them, let them remember that "*the righteous is taken away from the evil to come*," and will therefore eſcape "*the bite of the* FIERY SERPENTS," to which their militant brethren continue to be expoſed. Finally, let each of us reſolve, to diſmiſs all unavailing anxiety about the time or manner of our deceaſe, and be alone ſolicitous, that whenever it happens, our ſouls may be found in a ſtate of preparation for the awful change; and then it will be of little importance, whether it is in the retirement of Mount Hor with Aaron, in the tumult of the battle with Saul, or in any other place which it may

pleaſe

pleaſe God to ordain. For if we wait with patience till we receive his ſummons, we may be ſure it will arrive at the preciſe moment, when it is moſt for our intereſt that it ſhould take place.

HERE Mr. Worthington ceaſed ſpeaking, and a ſhort pauſe enſued. The ſilence was at length interrupted by 'ſquire Hunt, who, though he occaſionally frequented the Church, was by no means a regular attendant. But having heard, the preceding Sunday, of the manuſcript Lectures that were to be read at the Hall, his curioſity had induced him to be preſent that day at Divine ſervice, as a paſſport to his introduction afterwards, with the party who uſually aſſembled at Mr. Worthington's manſion; where he was entertained more on the footing of neighbourly civility, than of perſonal reſpect.

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He now began his diſcourſe, with ſome illiberal reflections upon the whole body of the Clergy; and finiſhed by obſerving, he was glad his friend had given them a *rub*, towards his concluſion, for faith, the parſons loved to have all the *preachments* to themſelves, but as to *practice*, they minded little of that; they were at all times ready enough to take their *tythes*, but as for good deeds, and ſuch like, other people, he thought, beat them all hollow. The churchmen, he added, were a proud, avaricious ſet, and mentioned the Rector and Curate of the next pariſh, (in which ſtood a part of his large eſtate) in proof of what he had advanced.——On hearing this ungenerous obſervation, a glance of diſapprobation darted from the eyes of Mr. Worthington; but a moment's reflection reſtored the uſual ſerenity of his countenance, and he coolly anſwered, that he thought

thought general cenſure on collective bodies of men, was highly unjuſt to the individuals of which they were compoſed; and that he had been more fortunate than his neighbour, as moſt of the Clergy of his acquaintance were perſons of great worth, integrity, and honour.

It is very certain, continued he, that the ſhepherds of the flock ſhould be as careful not to go aſtray *themſelves*, as to keep their *charge* within the fold; and it is greatly to be lamented by the truly religious, that any of them ſhould, by baſe or inconſiderate conduct, injure the ſacred cauſe thy profeſs to ſupport. But ſtill the *laity* ſhould remember, that however holy is the function of the prieſt, thoſe who are appointed to it, are ſtill but *men*, ſubject to the like paſſions, temptations, and difficulties of ſituation, with their unconſecrated fellow-creatures. Let us likewiſe recollect, that if

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they, as the *root* ſhould be holy, we, as the *branches*, ſhould be no leſs ſo: and that the corruption of the inferior clergy is often to be attributed to the looſe manners of their opulent patrons, with which, indeed, it is very diſhonourable in them to comply; but who, on worldly principles, it would be *ruinous* to offend.

There are two points of view, ſubjoined Mr. Wentworth, in which every action may be taken, and it muſt be acknowledged, that in giving the deſcription of the clergymen in queſtion, our neighbour has not traced the outlines on the favourable ſide. But give me leave to aſk, muſt not the incumbent of the living be maintained? and muſt he not ſupport his family? Do, therefore, my good ſir, when you cenſure the rapacity and avarice of your Rector in eſtabliſhing his juſt claims, conſider, whether with a wife, and a family of twelve children, he

ought

ought to relinquiſh them. But the demands of religious contributions are eſteemed a very ſevere tax, while on the *turf* and the *kennel* immenſe fortunes are exhauſted.

As to the character of the worthy Curate in queſtion, I have known its excellence from his youth; and if he has a fault, it is that of an over-ſcrupulous delicacy reſpecting his own behaviour; ſo that he ſometimes declines the ſocial entertainments he might innocently join, leſt he ſhould be conſidered as acting inconſiſtently with the duties of his ſacred profeſſion: but his noble and ingenuous temper is as far removed from *pride* as from *impiety*; and did you but attend his public inſtructions, or were you better acquainted with his private virtues, you would regard him not only as an ornament to the Church, but a glory to human nature.

Well, well, replied the 'ſquire, I know nothing of him I confeſs; but I have invited

vited him repeatedly to dine with me of a Sunday, and he always makes a grave bow, and begs to be excuſed: ſo faith! I thought him but a comical, *ſurly* ſort of a fellow: however, if you ſay it is otherwiſe, very well; and there's no harm done, you know.

Indeed, returned Mr. Wentworth, gravely, I am not entirely of that opinion; for ſome of the preſent company may be unacquainted with Mr. Goodall, and conſequently, depending upon your account, may form very unjuſt ideas of him; and thus this excellent man may be reckoned amongſt the number of thoſe unworthy churchmen, whoſe conduct cannot be too ſeverely reprobated; but which ought not to reflect diſhonour upon the whole body of the clergy.

You ſhould likewiſe, ſir, added he, conſider on this occaſion, that to complete the idea of a good man, all the moral attributes

muſt

muſt unite in his character; and before you condemn the Rector for inſiſting on his *dues*, you ſhould be aware, that he would equally incur your diſapprobation, if he did not *diſcharge his debts*, for liberality and juſtice muſt go hand in hand, before either of them ſeparately can be entitled to reſpect.

Aye! aye! Mr. Wentworth, replied the other, there's ſome truth in that, to be ſure, but let's have done with the parſons. However, I wiſh my old mother had been with us to hear 'Squire Worthington's ſtory to night, for ſhe's always threatening I ſhall break my neck in the chaſe; and my laſt new hunter has ſuch a confounded deal of mettle in the field, that if the Tower of Babel ſtood in his way when he is out with the hounds, or hears the ſound of the horn, I'd lay my life he'd clear it at once by a

flying

flying leap. But I tell the good woman, a man can't die before his time comes, and ſo ſhe need not be frightened. Eh neighbour!

To this addreſs Mr. Worthington ſeriouſly anſwered, that his meaning had been greatly miſunderſtood, if it was ſuppoſed to indicate, that the term of mortal life depended upon an irreverſible decree, which no accident could accelerate, or prudence retard. It is by forming abſurd notions of Providence, that men are led into the wildeſt and moſt inconſiſtent extremes, ſometimes aſcribing every action or event to the interference of the Deity, and repreſenting themſelves as mere automatons, which, in effect, muſt overturn the ſyſtem of rationality, and invert the ſanctions of retributive juſtice: while the fataliſt, by a concluſion equally unfounded and ridiculous, does on other occaſions exalt his darling principle into the throne of the

Supreme,

Supreme, and make the law of *neceſſity* ſuperior to the *will of God.*

Nor is the idea of unavoidable fatality leſs immoral in its conſequences, than erroneous in its foundation: for if no precautions can avert the danger, and no piety or exertion make our reſiſtance effectual, the operations of the beſt qualities, both of mind and body, muſt be diſpirited, if not abſolutely precluded. For inſtance, if we ſuppoſe that our diſſolution muſt occur at a a given period, and in a poſitive manner, to what temptations of raſhneſs and impiety does not ſuch an idea lead? In the approach of ſickneſs, it muſt render us more indifferent to the trial of medicinal aid, and invalidate the ſtrongeſt motive to devotional fervour: for although it may be ſaid, that if no mortal conſequences are apprehended, we may ſtill wiſh to mitigate the ſenſations of pain; yet that is frequently found a very

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inadequate motive of reſtraint from the exceſſes of voluptuouſneſs, and a very inſufficient ſtimulus to the practice of piety, in compariſon with the effects which are produced by the fear of death, when its hour is ſuppoſed to be undetermined.

Mr. Laſcelles, who was preſent, now ſtopped his friend, to aſk whether admitting theſe objections, he did not allow that the belief of fataliſm, whatever it might do in times of ſickneſs, would inſpire the healthy with greater courage and contempt of danger. Whether it was not a perſuaſion particularly favourable to military men, by encouraging them to hazardous attempts, and by ſoothing the anxiety of friends in their behalf.

My dear Laſcelles, rejoined the former amiable ſpeaker, you muſt never imagine that *wrong principles* can produce *right practice*; or that it is neceſſary to uphold a

falſe creed, in order to produce ſuperior advantages to the true one.

The whole tenor of Scripture repreſents the Deity as the only arbiter of life and death. How then can we ſuppoſe a power independent of his providence, which can fix the date of mortal exiſtence?

There is only one ſenſe in which a reſtrictive term is properly uſed when it refers to the Divinity, that he *cannot do wrong*; becauſe the perfection of rectitude is the law of God's nature, and always congenial with it. But to ſay that the days of our life have any limits but his pleaſure, is, in the words of the Poet, to "*maim heaven's perfections*" by the modifications of human fancy.

The portion of Sacred Hiſtory which we have juſt conſidered, is a ſtriking proof of the contrary of your poſition. Aaron was to die in Mount Hor, inſtead of being

permitted

permitted to enter into Canaan, expreſsly as a puniſhment of his offence at the waters of Meribah: but could this have been ſaid with propriety of his death, if it would have happened the ſame whether he had ſinned there or not?

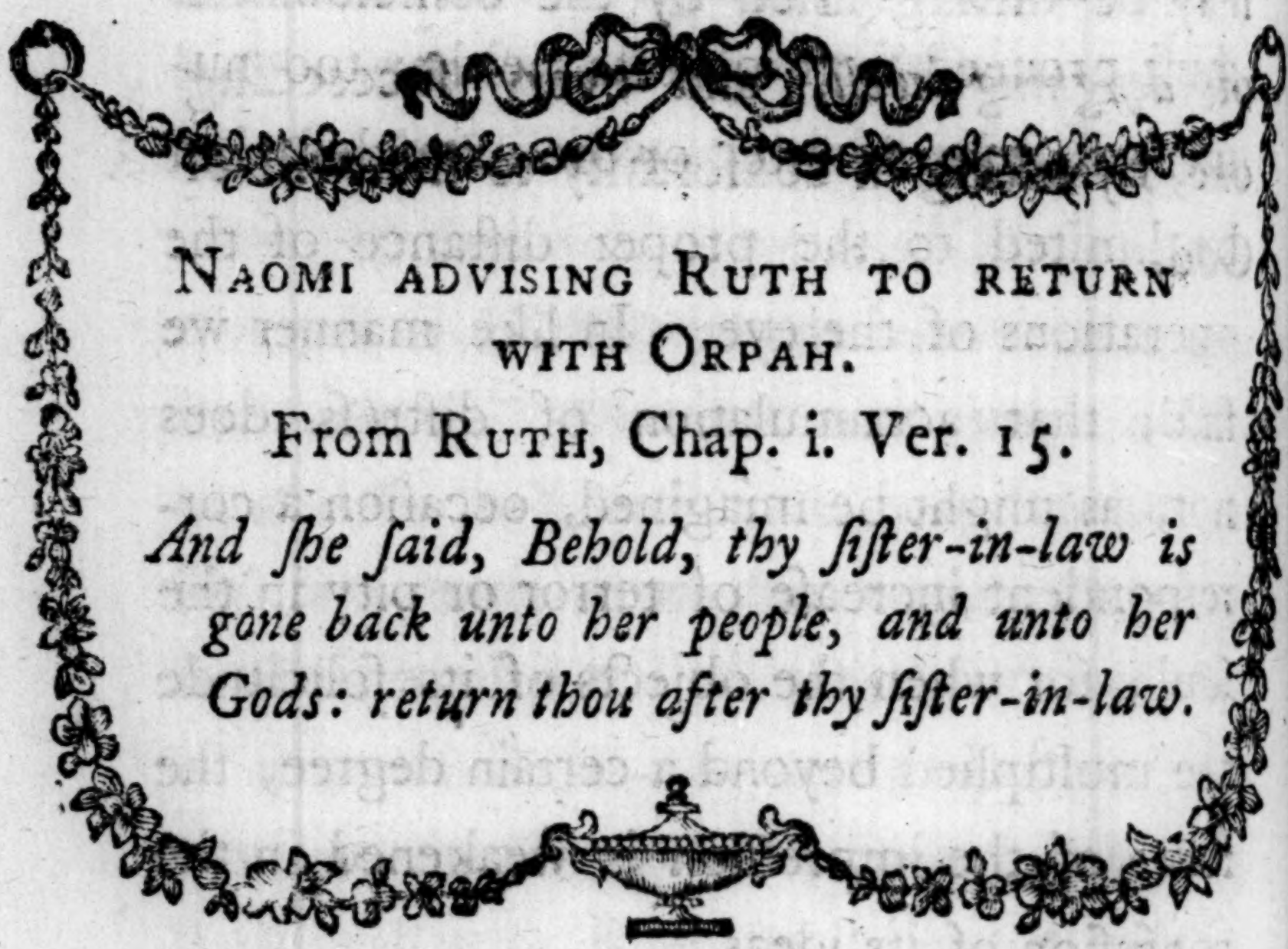
The lives of Caleb and Joſhua, we are as directly told, were prolonged, becauſe they gave a faithful report of the promiſed land, when the other ſpies brought an exaggerated and falſe account, to diſcourage the people. Now in both theſe caſes, and a variety of others, it will be difficult to reconcile the events with the ſcheme of the fataliſts: for if God was reſtrained by his own abſolute decree, or by any neceſſity of things, to fix the period of a creature's exiſtence, how could he afterwards reverſe it, either as a token of his approbation or diſpleaſure?

You imagine, however, that ſuch an opinion is ſometimes a favorable auxiliar to the qualities of reſignation and courage. It may, my friend, like other deceptions, inſpire a ſudden impulſe of raſhneſs, and a falſe contempt of danger: but it is from juſt notions of God's omniſcience and moral attributes, that we muſt acquire the firmneſs of conſtant magnanimity, and unſhaken truſt. The man who imagines that no accident will anticipate the moment of his departure from the world, may be tempted to deeds of daring folly, and acts of fatal preſumption; but he who conſiders God as unceaſingly watchful over his conduct, will at no time tempt his own fate by unjuſtifiable raſhneſs: yet when the obligations of duty, require his exertions in a poſt of danger, he will fear no evil, he will ſhrink from no oppoſition, but aſſured of the Divine protection, and commending

his

his ſoul to its Creator, he will have no other ſolicitude than that whether it ſhall pleaſe Heaven to ſend an earlier or a later period to his days on earth, the preſent moment may be diſtinguiſhed by the conſciouſneſs of *deſigning well*, and every ſucceeding one, by acting in conformity to the will of God.

PAINTING, No. 3.



NAOMI ADVISING RUTH TO RETURN WITH ORPAH.

From RUTH, Chap. i. Ver. 15.

And ſhe ſaid, Behold, thy ſiſter-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her Gods: return thou after thy ſiſter-in-law.

THE operations of the mind, obſerved Mr. Worthington, are frequently compared to the different exerciſes of our bodily faculties, and nothing can be conceived

ceived more analagous to the effects produced by tender repreſentations on the ſympathetic affections, than thoſe beautiful pictures which are painted on the retina, and which, to produce a diſtinct effect, muſt proceed from objects neither too numerous, too minute, or too extended, but be limited to the proper diſtance of the operations of the eye. In like manner we find, that accumulation of diſtreſs does not, as might be imagined, occaſion a correſpondent increaſe of terror or pity in the ſoul; for when the objects of its ſolicitude are multiplied beyond a certain degree, the force of the impreſſion is weakened in the confuſion of its ideas.

For this reaſon we are leſs affected in reading the account of *thouſands* and *ten thouſands*, who have periſhed in battle, than when we peruſe the melancholy ſtory of domeſtic grief, occaſioned by the loſs

of *one* ſoldier, to an aged parent, a diſtracted widow, or unhappy orphans. It is from the ſame cauſe, that a general relation of the miſeries of famine, extended to a *whole country*, is read with the moſt frigid indifference; but every ſentiment of compaſſion is awakened, if the particular members of a family, like that of Elimelech, are brought forward, and repreſented as ſuffering from its calamitous influence.

The beautiful epiſode of the book of Ruth, has been always conſidered as peculiarly intereſting; and the painter has ſhewn his judgment as an artiſt, in ſelecting this moſt affecting moment of her life, to draw her animated form, improved as it muſt have been, by the exquiſite graces of refined ſenſibility.

Every image is here aſſembled, that could advance the general deſign, and melt the ſpectator with emotions of correſpondent

ſympathy. In the fore-ground, an aged tree, which, by the ſize of its hollow trunk, appears to have been the largeſt growth of the country, is an appoſite emblem of the dejected Naomi, whom it ſhades with its remaining branches; and whoſe grey hairs and furrowed cheeks, witneſs the decays of time, and exhibit a fine contraſt to the youthful beauty of Ruth, whoſe very attitude denotes impatience and denial, while Naomi is perſuading her to return, and points to the retiring Orpah, who is ſeen ſtanding in the middle diſtance, a moſt ſtriking figure of irreſolution; her *body* being turned towards the hamlet which is diſcoverable beyond, while her *face* reverts to the forſaken travellers, with an expreſſion of ſorrowful reluctance and indeciſion.

You are all, my friends, well acquainted with the ſtory from whence this picture is drawn; but we will juſt retrace the outlines,

in order to aſſiſt your memory in forming thoſe deductions which naturally ariſe from it.

During the time of the Judges, as it is called, before there was a King over Iſrael, the land of Judah was afflicted with famine. This public calamity, one of the chaſtiſements of the Almighty for national ſins, cannot extend its effects to the guilty, without likewiſe involving the innocent in its ruinous progreſs; the government of Providence being eſtabliſhed upon general laws, which it would be unſuitable to reverſe in favour of perſonal merit. Hence the abſolute rewards of virtue, or the puniſhment of vice, do not obtain in the preſent ſtate, but are properly reſerved to a future judgment, where each individual ſhall reap whatſoever he has ſown. Thus while the good are left to ſhare with the bad in the common events of life, they are ſtill guided

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and ſupported in their courſe by the inviſible hand of an omniſcient Being, who, knowing their integrity, directs the final iſſue of all events to their ultimate advantage.

From having been ever accuſtomed to the happy ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, we behold their ordinary revolutions with indifference and unconcern; and enjoy the ſunſhine, or lament the ſtorm, merely as they happen to retard or promote our different ſchemes of entertainment. With the farmer or the mariner it may, indeed, be otherwiſe; and as far as the harveſt of the one, or the progreſs of the other is concerned, they will anxiouſly regard the aſpect of the heavens: but neither the indolent ſenſualiſt, or the buſy ſons of traffic, are further intereſted that ſeed time and harveſt ſhould regularly ſucceed, than as their ſeparate purſuits are affected by them; nor do they conſider the direful conſequences that would reſult

from the alteration or ſuſpenſion of only *one* ſeaſon of the year.

"*But when the judgments of the Almighty are abroad, the inhabitants of a land will learn righteouſneſs*;" and while the meagre aſpect of Famine is ſeen ſtalking towards us with haſty ſtrides, the boldeſt heart ſhrinks back from it with terror, and is earneſt to invoke that Being, who alone can beſtow "*fruitful ſeaſons, and fill our hearts with joy and gladneſs.*" Yet, though it is our duty to pray for the removal of evils, they do not always take their flight with the aſcending ſmoke of the firſt ſacrifice. The men of Iſrael had "*every one done that which was right in his* own *eyes*," not that which was right in the ſight of Jehovah; and therefore they were ſtill left to purſue their own devices, while he withdrew from them the ſuſtenance of life.

Elimelech

Elimelech beheld the public diſtreſſes with a ſorrowing mind; but when the wife of his boſom became a ſharer in the general miſery, when he ſaw his two ſons, Mahlon and Chilion, waſted by degrees into thin ſpectres, mere reſemblances of their former ſelves; when he felt the gnawings of hunger faſtening its agonizing gripe on his own vitals, what before was the calm commiſeration of patriotic grief, encreaſed to inſupportable anguiſh, and produced an immediate determination. He loved Bethlehem Judah, the land of his nativity. He cheriſhed his patrimonial inheritance, and the friendly aſſociates who were eſtabliſhed round it. But, "*all that a man hath will he give for his life.*" His Naomi had likewiſe her regrets and her objections. To remove into a ſtrange land, an idolatrous country, to quit the eſtabliſhment that had ſo long occupied her domeſtic cares, to

remove

remove from every face ſhe was accuſtomed to behold, and bid adieu to every heart whoſe kindneſs was impreſſed on hers, alas! it was a ſevere trial! Each reſpective object, whether animate or inanimate, acquired new intereſt in her regard; and to *leave* Bethlehem Judah, was the next evil to remaining in it. The famine, however, was ſtill in the land, and the ſupplies of bread became daily leſs and leſs attainable.

We often perform many things from neceſſity, which, while dependent on our own election, ſeem quite beyond our ſtrength. Thus the continuance of ſcarcity, at laſt drove Elimelech and his family, with melancholy hearts and tearful eyes, to take up their reſidence in Moab. Here, as it frequently happens in the courſe of human affairs, one misfortune was the harbinger of another; and grief or ſickneſs, or ſome ſeemingly fortuitous accident, removed the

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deſire of their hearts, and took the father of their houſe away. Then, no doubt, they experienced a miſtake which is common to the diſtreſſed, of having ſuppoſed the meaſure of their former calamity to have been full, ſince it was now augmented by a bitter drop, which made the cup of affliction nearly overflow.

While their little houſhold continued ſo cordially united, even the country of Moab might in time have become agreeable; but now, alas! the widowed Noami had loſt her protector, her counſellor, and friend. What could ſhe do in a ſtrange land with her two ſons? What could they do without the guide of their youth? An additional gloom now overſpread their before-darkened proſpect, but through the deepeſt ſhade of calamity, a ray of divine mercy can penetrate; and as it is God that killeth, it is alſo He that maketh alive; as his power woundeth,

ſo his hands make whole. There is no reaſon to deſpond in the moſt deſerted condition, ſince in the country of *enemies*, we may find unexpected *friends*, and form the moſt auſpicious connections, where we were before entirely unknown. The unfortunate Ephrathites, whom death had deſpoiled of a huſband and a father, found in their foreign aſylum other relatives to ſupply his loſs. The intermarriages of the tribes of Iſrael, had been interrupted in their own country, before theſe perſons had quitted its juriſdiction: and the young ſojourners, pleaſed with the hoſpitality of the inhabitants of Moab, ſelected wives from among them. Naomi was happy in theſe additions to her family, and peace and pleaſure ſmiled again at her board.

The continuance of her proſperity and comfort was, however, but ſhort, at leaſt ſo it appeared on the retroſpect; for though

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it is uſual to think the hours of *grief* move heavily on, thoſe of *joy* ſeem to fly away on the ſwifteſt pinions.

The beloved ſons, whom ſhe had reared with tenderneſs, and whoſe filial affection was the moſt delightful recompence of her cares, "*Mahlon and Chilion died alſo both of them; and the woman was left of her two ſons, and her huſband.*" In this ſituation ſhe found herſelf unable to ſupport the ſight of thoſe ſcenes where ſhe had ſuffered ſuch deprivations, and where every thing reminded her of the love and the loſs of the dear deceaſed.

She had heard in the land of Moab, that the cauſe which had driven her thither, was removed, and that "*the Lord had viſited his people in giving them bread:*" ſhe therefore determined to return and end her days in her native land, and acquainted her daughters in-law with the deſign, gratefully

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acknowledging their friendſhip and attention to her during her misfortunes. Naomi's ſoul was the ſeat of ſenſibility. She had quitted Bethlehem Judah with diſtreſs, but ſhe could not, in order to reviſit it, leave the ſpot where ſhe had ſojourned, without anguiſh. How complicated are our pleaſures and pains in this varying ſcene of exiſtence! the very circumſtance which *delights* us to-day, will *pain* us to-morrow. Who, therefore, knows "*what is good for man in this life*," and how weak is it to be "*troubled about many things*," when the bleſſing of God is the *only* thing that is *needful*.

In what a melancholy and diſpirited frame of mind, muſt the widow of Elimelech have prepared for her departure, with the thought of leaving behind the remains of all thoſe who had accompanied her journey thither. The conduct of Naomi, however, ſhews her native tenderneſs to have been

reſtrained

reſtrained by prudence; and whatever were her ſufferings at the hour of ſeparation, ſhe urged her affectionate daughters to return to their reſpective families, and leave her to purſue her ſolitary way. I will not injure her ſpeech on this occaſion, by any paraphraſe that might deaden the beautiful pathos of the expreſſions. "*And Naomi ſaid unto her two daughters-in-law, go, return each to her mother's houſe; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find reſt each of you, in the houſe of her huſband.*" To this grateful remembrance of the paſt and pathetic prayer for their future happineſs, ſhe added the kiſſes and tears of affection, in which the young women joined with equal ardor, "*They lifted up their voice and wept.*"

This was one of thoſe tender moments in life, when the parties concerned ſeem to collect

collect all their affections, as it were, to one focus; they are the whole world to each other, and disinterested love obtains the ascendant over every other passion, which may be properly called, the *triumph of sensibility*. "*And they said unto her, surely we will return with thee unto thy people.*" Naomi was gratified by this proof of their regard, for who can be unmoved by the declaration of such an attachment? But she mildly resisted their importunity, alledging, that she had no means remaining to recompence their filial tenderness.

The pityless grave had swallowed up her beloved sons, and her age and sorrows afforded no hopes of any future posterity. She had left her country accompanied by the tendereſt relatives; but the Lord had dealt very bitterly with her, and she was returning back empty, and for their sakes she doubly lamented her fate. "*Nay, my daughters,*

daughters, for it grieveth me much for your ſakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out againſt me." The violence of paſſion ſoon ſubſides, and the firſt tranſport of tenderneſs which the eloquent grief of the aged ſufferer occaſioned, was ſucceeded in Orpah by a reſtoration to her habitual ſentiments. She would have been pleaſed that Naomi ſhould have continued in Moab, but ſhe could not reſolve to quit Moab in order to accompany Naomi. "*They lifted up their voice and wept again; and Orpah kiſſed her mother in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.*" Then it was, as the painter has exhibited the ſcene, that retiring in all the agitation of grief, ſhe looked back on thoſe whom ſhe never expected to meet again; with her eyes riveted on her departing friends, then it was that the venerable mourner pointed her out to Ruth as an example; urging her by every prudent, perſuaſive, and even religious

ligious motive, to follow her ſiſter. Who but muſt wait in all the eagerneſs of ſuſpence, for the reply of the beautiful Moabiteſs? Will ſhe leave her country, her mother's houſe, the idol deities of her nation, and all the fairer proſpects of life? or ſhall Naomi return in bitterneſs indeed, a lonely wanderer to her deſerted country? no, there are frequently changes for the better, not always for the worſe, in the diſpenſations of Heaven. God inclines the hearts of ſome of his ſervants, to ſoothe the afflictions with which others are borne down; and Ruth is one of thoſe ſuperior ſouls who are fit inſtruments of the Divine compaſſion. Her figure, exalted by the benevolence of her purpoſe, ſeems almoſt angelic, while claſping her mother's hand with an energy of affection, ſhe exclaims, " *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goeſt I will go, where thou*

lodgeſt I will lodge: thy people ſhall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou dieſt, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do ſo to me, and more alſo, if ought but death part thee and me."

What an entire alteration does the fervency of ſo true a friendſhip produce! and how different now appears to Naomi the intended journey to Bethlehem Judah, when accompanied by ſuch a companion! It is concord, unity, and affection, which conſtitutes the happineſs of ſocial beings. Friendſhip founded on right principles, is the nobleſt ſentiment that can expand the ſoul, nor can it ſubſiſt on any other foundation. The friends of convenience, accommodation and pleaſantry, like Orpah, may have a degree of good nature and pliability of manners; but after having ſhed a tear of regret, or given an affectionate embrace, they will leave us in the time of

ſorrow,

ſorrow, to proceed alone in our briery path, while they return back to their more fortunate connections.

Orpah is a common character, eaſy and compliant, following the bent of early habits, and the prejudices of education, without any determinate principles, but ſuch as ſhe receives from thoſe around her. When her paſſions are excited by the ſight of Naomi's affliction, ſhe joins with Ruth in the declaration of accompanying her mother-in-law, but is ſoon diſſuaded from the intention, and returns again to her family in Moab. Very different are the ſentiments and conduct of Ruth; ſhe has conceived an ardent eſteem for Naomi, and a reverence for the religion ſhe profeſſes. Impreſſed with theſe feelings, ſhe is willing to leave her country, her relatives and former gods, and go with the friend of her ſoul, to the place where JEHOVAH

is acknowledged and worſhipped. Hence ſhe defies cenſure, and ſubdues natural affection. She reſigns the future advantages of her native eſtabliſhment, and unites in fate and fortune with the mother of her departed huſband. The whole of her behaviour agrees with the warmth of her profeſſions, and ſhews they were not lightly or inconſiderately uttered; while ſuch a degree of heroiſm and fortitude diſtinguiſhes her mind, and exalts her character, as not only entitles it to reſpect, but renders it worthy of imitation.

It is certainly our duty to adhere to the faith of our fathers, till we diſcover it to be erroneous; nor ſhould we be eaſily perſuaded to quit the religion in which we have been educated. During our minority we muſt rely on the information of our parents, who are accountable for the tenets which they impreſs on our minds. But when

riper years have given us independence with reaſon, we ſhould uſe it to examine the authenticity of that evidence which demands our aſſent, and on which more than mortal life or preſent happineſs depend.

God will pardon the errors of miſguided zeal, when with the Apoſtle Paul we can truly aver, they were occaſioned by ignorance. But that ignorance itſelf becomes a crime, if we reſt in it from wilful indifference or neglect; and like Orpah continue our former habits, and remain in Moab, to avoid the inconvenience or danger that might attend the change, on our going over to Iſrael.

The examination of points of faith, is not recommended as a fit inveſtigation for the weak minds of youth, who are as yet unformed by experience, and their faculties incapable of ſound argument, or right deduction. But when arrived at the full

age

age of diſcretion, it becomes us to ſearch the Scriptures with an humble and teachable diſpoſition, that we "*may be able to give a reaſon of the hope that is in us, with meekneſs and fear:*" Not indeed with a dependence on our *own unaſſiſted reaſon*, but imploring the guidance, the aid of God, and ſubmitting all the faculties of our ſouls, to the divine impulſe of his Holy Spirit, who is alone able to enlighten our underſtanding, and lead us into all truth. At the ſame time, maintaining a charitable opinion of thoſe who differ from us, upon this truly evangelical principle, that to his own maſter every one is accountable, and by *God's judgment*, and not *our opinion*, he muſt ſtand or fall. Very different from this is the temper of the ſceptic. He is deſirous to raiſe objections againſt the truths of Revelation, and againſt Revelation itſelf; not with a view to have thoſe objections

anſwered, but that he may diſſeminate them; not to obtain fuller conviction himſelf, but with a malicious deſign to unſettle the faith of others.

It is difficult to remove the prepoſſeſſions of our early years; but when we are convinced they are wrong, it is a mark of ingenuity, and ſhews true fortitude, to ſurmount them. The behaviour of Ruth diſcovered theſe virtues in an eminent degree; and it affords us an inſtance of the benefits reſulting from pious friendſhip, and the advantages good perſons may reſpectively derive from correſpondent virtues in each other.

If Ruth was the comforter of Naomi, Naomi was the inſtructor of Ruth. If Ruth ſoothed her mother's ſorrows, and accompanied her on her journey, Naomi directed her daughter to a never-failing refuge, and led her into the way of ſalvation. But, perhaps, while we conſider

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our beautiful heroine as ſhewing an example of the moſt ſublime friendſhip, ſhe may be condemned as deficient in her obſervance of the natural connections in her own family. In juſtification of this ſeeming neglect, we muſt remark, that Ruth could not have conformed to the religion of the Hebrews, without quitting her own idolatrous nation; and by her admiſſion amongſt the people of Iſrael, and adoption into the line of Judah, we may conclude, that her reſignation of every former relative, and former expectation, met its reward, and was ſanctioned by the motive which occaſioned the important ſacrifice. She certainly evinced that determined fortitude which is the foundation of true greatneſs; and ſhewed that the tendereſt ſenſibility of mind, is not incompatible with magnanimity of conduct. A thouſand obſtructions would have preſented themſelves, to deter a perſon

of leſs ſteadineſs, from ſo hazardous an undertaking. Her youth and beauty expoſed her to ſnares and dangers; and the difficulties and inconveniencies, the fatigue and trouble, that muſt be expected to attend the journey of ſuch a poor afflicted wanderer as Naomi, might well have excuſed her return with Orpah. Ruth was aware that ſhe might probably incur the cenſures of men, with whom every action is accounted blameable, that is not warranted by ſucceſs; but where there is a willing mind, no obſtacles are thought invincible; and in the ſight of God, a truly religious *motive* will prove a ſure recommendation.

The whole ſtory of Naomi and Ruth, diſplays a ſeries of events, entirely calculated to inſpire reſignation, hope, and reliance on Providence. It ſhews us how far virtuous individuals may be confounded with others in times of general diſtreſs, and

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that they are not exempted from the common courſe of evils, from the ſufferings of ſickneſs, and the ſtroke of death; and that amidſt theſe ſcenes of national affliction and domeſtic woe, the Almighty ſtill preſides, who can mitigate their utmoſt ſeverity when he ſees it needful; can cheer the ſufferings of the deſpondent emigrant, by an introduction to unexpected friends, and increaſe the number of his own profeſſors, from thoſe who were before ignorant of his worſhip, making ſuch as have not known his laws, to ſerve him.

Nothing can more effectually evince the chequered viciſſitudes of human life, than Naomi's condition. One while exulting in family union and proſperity, and then ſinking into all the grief of ſolitary wretchedneſs. But it ſhould inſtruct us, that in the worſt circumſtances, it is a proof of weakneſs to deſpair, and of cowardice to indulge a

dejected ſpirit: for the unforeſeen rotation of events, as often brings unexpected *good*, as it produces unexpected *evil*; and neither the one nor the other can befall us, without the permiſſion of a gracious God. The famine in Bethlehem Judah, was the apparent cauſe of driving Elimelech to Moab; but there the marriage of his ſons was appointed to enliven their remaining days, and to be a ſource of comfort to their hapleſs mother, when their death ſhould ſeemingly deprive her of her laſt conſolation.

We cannot, indeed, aſcertain the exact point, where *human agency* yields to *Divine interpoſition*; but it ſhould encourage our moſt ſtrenuous exertions, when we reflect that God knows where to find ſuch perſons, as are fit inſtruments of his Providence, and can ſelect a Ruth from amongſt an idolatrous people, as worthy of having her

name

name enrolled in the royal race of Judah, from whom, according to the fleſh, the Meſſiah was to deſcend. However unfavorable or low our circumſtances may appear, we can never be placed beneath the notice of our Creator, or reduced to any ſtation, from whence he cannot exalt us.

Had Ruth acted with leſs fortitude and virtue, ſhe had probably followed Orpah into obſcurity, and fruſtrated, with regard to herſelf, the deſigns of God in her behalf.

Let us therefore, as far as our duty is apparent, comply with its injunctions; unceaſingly praying for direction from above; and that whether it ſhall be the pleaſure of the Deity, to raiſe or to depreſs our outward condition, we may act conformably to His will, and then we may reſt aſſured, that if we do not obtain either happineſs or diſtinction upon earth, we ſhall receive ſalvation in the heavenly kingdom, through

the merits and mediation of the Redeemer, ſhare with Him in glory, and ſhine like the ſtars for ever and ever.

At a proper interval after Mr. Worthington had ceaſed reading, Miſs Eliza Thornby, whoſe attention had been deeply engaged by his ſubject, modeſtly obſerved, "That ſhe hoped he would excuſe the liberty of the remark, but in her opinion, he had ſhewn leſs candour to the character of Orpah, than it ſeemingly merited. She applauded the behaviour of Ruth, but acknowledged that the attachment of her ſiſter-in-law to her *natural* friends, was ſo congenial to the feelings of filial tenderneſs in her own heart, that ſhe was ſorry to hear it condemned; and did not expect a man of generous principles, would have diſapproved that conduct which aroſe from motives of *gratitude*, and was founded on *duty*."

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My dear young friend, replied Mr. W. it is not always allowable to decide on the merit of actions, even by the moſt warrantable *feelings* of the beſt minds. The ſentiments you have expreſſed, do honour to the heart from whence they ſpring; but in affairs of conſcience, and where we have the immediate direction of the Almighty, higher duties than thoſe of natural love and gratitude, ſometimes oblige us to ſubdue thoſe, otherwiſe, amiable propenſities.

You are tenderly intereſted for the reputation of Orpah, and I have hurt your ſenſibility by calling her a *common* character. I doubt not, therefore, you conſider Ruth to be rather degraded than raiſed in your eſteem, by forſaking her family. But in the conſideration of Scripture Portraits, we ſhall loſe much of their effect, if we are not careful to place them in a proper light. We are apt ſometimes to remove the

piece to too great a diſtance, which, by diminiſhing the object, renders it leſs intereſting; or elſe, ſurveying it through a falſe medium, we enlarge the figure beyond its juſt proportion, and equally deſtroy the pleaſure and advantage that would reſult from the contemplation of a finiſhed copy. If the perſons of paſt ages are conſidered as beings of a different ſpecies from ourſelves, uninfluenced by the paſſions of human nature, we ſhall not be incited to imitate their example; and on the other hand, if we forget the alteration which the courſe of ages, and change of manners have produced, we ſhall leſs clearly diſcern the inſtruction which would otherwiſe reſult from the exhibition of their characters.

I believe, ſaid Mr. Laſcelles, with a ſmile of ſarcaſtic pleaſantry, that our modern fine ladies would have ſome difficulty to conceive the ancient beauties, ſuch as

Sarah, Rebekah, and Ruth, to be proper models for themſelves; and will ſcarcely imagine; that from the ghoſtly fathers of thoſe primitive times, they were ſubject to ſimiliar temptations of adulation and flattery.

Yet there is little reaſon, replied Colonel Hoare, to queſtion that vice and folly have been unfortunately prevalent in every æra of the world; and though the examples of the Patriarchs were in that reſpect neither commendable nor excuſable, yet we find, that both Abraham and Iſaac thought it needful to conceal their marriage, at ſome particular places where they ſojourned, leſt the charms of their wives ſhould expoſe them to the danger of a ſeducer's vengeance: a plain proof that the paſſions of men produce ſimilar effects in every period; and that although the modifications of faſhion may occaſion a change of occu-

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pations or addreſs in perſons of ſuperior rank, virtue and wickedneſs will be always ſpecifically the ſame. Amnon and Abſalom were the curſes of David's family; and with the ſame diſpoſitions had they lived now, they would have been libertines and men of gallantry. The daughter of Jacob too, though born in a ſtill earlier period, reſembled the diſſipated females, who deſire, in whatever country they reſide, "*To go forth and ſee the daughters of the land.*" And I am of opinion, that the beautiful Orpah, though ſhe looks ſo demure in that picture, is not, as our fair neighbour has obſerved, one of Mr. Worthington's firſt favorites.

I may be wrong, ſaid that gentleman, in my ideas, for as the ſacred hiſtorian has not thought fit to amplify the relation, we can only judge from the curſory account of her ſeparation from Naomi. But it appears

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to me from the perusal of the facts, that she was in circumstances as nearly similar as possible to those of Ruth; and yet she shewed a very great difference in her behaviour: and as we often, from experience, perceive this difference of conduct to arise from the prevalence of education, and habits of thought, I cannot but suppose, as I before observed, she was a more *common character*; but by this distinction I would not be understood to mean a *wicked person*, but merely an *unreflecting* one. Young women in general, (pardon me ladies for the observation,) are too often educated as if they were only to exist upon earth, rather than as rational beings, and candidates for immortal happiness. They are suffered to pursue the pleasures of life, and the transient fame of terrestrial applause, without reflecting that they are *accountable agents*, and actors in a scene of the highest importance.

portance. Hence it follows, that they diſregard the concerns of Religion, becauſe it does not obtain their attention; and as their minds are unaccuſtomed to ſerious reflection, if they do not abſolutely neglect its inſtitutions, they engage in them, without conſidering the authority upon which they were founded, or the end for which they were deſigned. This I apprehend to have been the caſe with Orpah. She was naturally of an eaſy and ſocial diſpoſition; ſhe loved her relations, and ſhe reſpected Naomi. But the affection to her own friends and country predominating, ſhe returned to Moab, in order to enjoy their ſociety; yet we muſt ſuppoſe ſhe had been favored with the ſame opportunities of inſtruction in the faith of the Hebrews, as her ſiſter-in-law; but a volatile mind engaged in puerile and trifling purſuits, is diſinclined to avail itſelf of the cleareſt ſources of information.

Ruth,

Ruth, on the contrary, ſhews us that no ſex, age, or condition, is a bar to religious attainments; for though young and beautiful, ſhe was thoughtful and pious. She conſidered the ſtate of her country to be dangerous, becauſe it was idolatrous. Her parents were, in her opinion, unhappily eſtranged from the way of truth, and therefore as the wiſeſt and beſt courſe, ſhe determined to follow the dictates of her reaſon and her duty, and to ſacrifice every other conſideration to the true God, whom only, in future, ſhe reſolved to adore.

I have taken up your attention longer than I intended, to prove that my deſign was not to depreciate any laudable affections of the human heart, but to ſhew that every connection or concern of life, ought to be regarded as ſubordinate to the obligations of religious duty, and the obedience we owe to our Creator. We may innocently

enjoy

enjoy the delightful intercourſe ariſing from the ties of conſanguinity, or the comforts of a generous friendſhip, when theſe engagements do not interfere with the ſervice of God. We may follow Naomi while ſhe walks in the way to Sion, but if the advice or example of our friends would pervert our faith, we have an unerring rule to direct our conduct, in theſe words of our Divine Redeemer: "*He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*"

PAINT-

PAINTING, No. 4.

MARTHA REPROVED.

From LUKE, Chap. x. Ver. 38—42.

Now it came to paſs as they went, that he entered into a certain Village; and a certain Woman, named Martha, received him into her Houſe. And ſhe had a ſiſter

called

called Mary, which alſo ſat at Jeſus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much ſerving, and came to him, and ſaid, Lord, doſt thou not care that my ſiſter hath left me to ſerve alone? bid her, therefore, that ſhe help me. And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: And Mary hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.

THIS rough outline of Martha's portrait, as drawn by St. Luke, bears ſo ſtrong a reſemblance to the generality of people in the world, ſaid Mr. Worthington, that it is difficult to conſider it as the likeneſs of a particular perſon. That over ſedulous anxiety, which is the diſtinguiſhing feature in her character, is ſo apt to intrude upon every heart, that I fear there are very few

who

who can entirely diſown the ſimilitude. Indeed, amidſt the buſy ſcenes of an active life, it requires an unuſual degree of circumſpection and piety, to maintain the affections in ſuch a ſtate of ſubjection, as ſhall give to worldly concerns that ſubordinate attention only, which is conſiſtent with our ſuperior duties; for while we readily render to Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's, we too often omit the payment of an equal tribute to the King of Kings. When we allow ourſelves time for a little ſerious reflection, it is aſtoniſhing to perceive about how many different things we are "troubled and careful," and in what a conſtant routine of frivolous occupations, the hours of moſt men are ſuffered to glide away. If real buſineſs impoſes on numbers a taſk of abſolute neceſſity, it is, perhaps, though ſometimes irkſome, the moſt innocent and the happieſt

occupation

occupation of life; becauſe ſuch perſons are not left to the dangerous deciſion of their own choice in the diſtribution of *time*, a talent for which every one is accountable to the great arbiter of his exiſtence. In fact, thoſe who have the leaſt to do, are frequently in the greateſt perturbation how they ſhall perform it, and make a more pompous diſplay of their inſignificant engagements, than others do of the moſt weighty concerns of public and private affairs with which they are entruſted.

As man was deſigned by his Creator for ſocial life, it is his duty to regulate the tenor of his thoughts and actions, in the fitteſt manner for the fulfilment of its duties. He muſt neither deſert the world, nor forget that he is but its temporary inhabitant; and while he is making a needful proviſion for his preſent probationary ſtate, it is incumbent on him to prepare

likewiſe

likewiſe for one which will be future and eternal. Our ſtations upon earth are now, apparently, aſſigned with much irregularity, and the fortunes and buſineſs of mankind ſeem to be very unequally divided. Still there is a circle of allotted duties, which, if properly performed, would be found like the manna in the wilderneſs, exactly proportioned to the faculties and ſtrength of each individual: and as the ancient Iſraelites found the meaſure of an omer was ſufficient for each man's proportion of food, and more would have become putrid and uſeleſs; ſo if we conſult the nature of our circumſtances, and what exertions they require, we ſhall find there is a ſufficient time allowed us for every rational and pious purpoſe of preſent and future advantage, but nothing over for the demands of vice or idleneſs. The moſt extended connections of life can but be filled to a certain degree,

degree, and the moſt contracted ſituation has likewiſe its peculiar obligations, though the arrangement of its employments muſt be different. Juſt as a map of the world does on its ſurface contain the ſame ſeas and continents, with the ſame diviſionary lines, whether it be taken on a larger or a ſmaller ſcale; and the latter may be equally exact, though more minutely delineated.

Martha was in a private ſtation; yet we find her domeſtic concerns occupied her whole attention, ſo that ſhe had no leiſure even to attend to the inſtructions of the Meſſiah. She owned his authority, and acknowledged his miſſion; but anxious to ſhew her regard by the hoſpitality of a plentiful entertainment, ſhe conſidered not that the Saviour's "*meat and drink was to do the will of his Father, and to finiſh his work*;" and in her zeal for his outward accommodation, ſhe not only

omitted

omitted to hear his admonitions, but loſt that harmony of temper, and ſifterly conſideration, which would have proved a more powerful recommendation to the Divine Viſitant. How many errors follow the moſt trifling deviation! and how guarded muſt have been the conduct of that perſon, who can look back on his intercourſe with ſociety for a ſingle day, without ſome occaſion of ſelf-reproach!

But are we to infer from what is related of this domeſtic occurrence, that Jeſus would condemn all the civilities of ordinary life, and oblige men to forego every meeting of kindneſs and feſtivity? It is evident from the general character of our Saviour, that the paſſage before us ought not to be underſtood in ſo reſtricted a ſenſe. He who was always courteous and condeſcending to every one, who himſelf aſſiſted to increaſe the hilarity of the gueſts, and mi-

raculouſly ſupplied their wants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, indiſputably proved that he was no enemy to friendly intercourſe and conviviality, in their proper ſeaſon.

The boundaries which ſeparate right from wrong, are frequently ſo imperceptible, that it requires ſome conſideration to aſcertain 'where ends the virtue, or begins the vice;' and we often heedleſsly ſtray into the precincts of the latter, while we imagine ourſelves ſecure within the fences of the former. And thus did the ſiſter of Lazarus indulge an exceſs of worldly ſolicitude, under the ſpecious idea of ſhewing greater reſpect to the Redeemer and his diſciples. But had ſhe duly reflected on the character of her ſacred Gueſt, ſhe would have been convinced, that no preparations of external ceremony, could be ſo acceptable to him, as the internal

welcome

welcome of a pious mind, humbly deſirous of information, and zealouſly profiting by the opportunity of receiving it from *ſuch a Teacher*. Was it poſſible for her to imagine, that Jeſus who knew the moſt ſecret thoughts of the heart, could be deceived by that appearance of courteſy, which had been the mean of kindling ſuch ungentle diſpoſitions in her heart, and induced her not only to repine at her ſiſter's ſuperior excellence, and to miſconſtrue the motive of her conduct, but almoſt to upbraid our Lord himſelf, for admitting Mary's voluntary attendance at his feet? Yet while we are obliged to cenſure the behaviour of Martha, we muſt acknowledge the picture is taken from the life, and that we may find in our own boſoms, the exact counterpart of the features, though we are compelled to admit, that the turn of them is unpleaſing. An exceſſive anxiety

for temporal objects, is one of the moſt dangerous failings which can intrude itſelf upon the heart of a Chriſtian. Its effects on his ſpiritual frame, are ſimilar to the workings of a deadly poiſon on the animal ſyſtem, which, when incautiouſly received, will inſinuate its baneful properties into every part, till at length it penetrates the vitals, and corrodes them with all the miſery of incurable anguiſh. Equally ſubtle is the progreſs of this mental diſeaſe; and the mind that is moſt infected, has rarely a ſuſpicion of its danger. Under the plauſible pretence of "*providing things honeſt in the ſight of all men*," certain ſpecie of ambition, vanity, and falſe ſhame are introduced, which effectually deſtroy the contentment and affiance of the ſoul. It is immaterial what is our ſituation in life, if this uneaſy ſpirit be permitted to trouble our repoſe. Martha had no children to

engage

engage her ſolicitude, or interrupt her labours; nor can we imagine, that in the retreat of a private family, and the retirement of an obſcure village, ſhe affected thoſe oſtentatious diſplays of elegance and profuſion, which diſtinguiſh the entertainments of the courtier, or the wealthy citizen: yet her thoughts were agitated with tumult and inquietude, and from an habitual fault of diſpoſition, ſhe loſt the ſelf-poſſeſſion of her mind, and its attendant ſerenity. Hence it was, that our Divine Maſter reproved that petulance which appeared in her application to him: "*and ſaid unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful. And Mary has choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.*" This pointed rebuke, addreſſed to an acknowledged friend of the Redeemer, demonſtrates the neceſſity of a pure inten-

tion, to render any ſervices acceptable in his ſight: for though he aſſured his diſciples, that "a cup of cold water *only*, if given to them as *his* followers, ſhall in no wiſe loſe its reward;" he here reprehends that officious deference which was ſhewn even to himſelf, from a worldly principle. Jeſus ſaw that the aſſiduity of Martha, was at that time leſs the conſequence of her religious reverence for him, than the natural expreſſion of an improper anxiety, which became conſpicuous on the moſt trifling occaſions. She was "*careful and troubled about many things*," therefore her fluctuating mind was not ſufficiently collected, to conſider the importance of the "*one thing needful.*" But Mary, with a ſuperior ſteadineſs, continued at the feet of Chriſt, and heard his words, truſting that he would be ſatisfied with her previous efforts for his temporal entertainment, while ſhe more

honoured

honoured his immediate preſence, by this proof of her pious regard to his doctrine.

There is a degree of care for the things of this world, which, as I before obſerved, it is our duty to maintain: we muſt not devote ourſelves ſo entirely to meditation and devotional exerciſes, as to neglect the proper buſineſs of our ſtation, and deſert the care of our family. During the time we are employed in active exertions for their ſupport, or in benevolent offices for the good of others, we are in the moſt enlarged ſenſe, promoting the cauſe of religion. But "*whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do,*" it is to be performed with a view "*to the glory of God;*" we ſhall ſoon loſe ſight of this divine motive, if we ſuffer ourſelves to be ſo wholly engroſſed by the avocations of life, as to leave ourſelves no leiſure for imitating Mary, and ſitting like her at Jeſus' feet. It is *there* we muſt

frequently take our voluntary ſtation, to imbibe his ſpirit, and ſolicit his grace; there we muſt renew that pious ſenſibility of mind, and abſolute dependance upon God, which is ſo apt to be impaired by the attrition of worldly commerce. We muſt often detach ourſelves both from our neceſſary and pleaſurable engagements, in order to attend the ordinances of religion, and hear the words of Chriſt; for the faculties of the human mind, are ſo limited in their operations, that the views of immortality will eſcape their notice, amidſt the conſtant preſſure of worldly buſineſs; as the cleareſt proſpects are hid from the bodily eye, by the paſſing of intermediate objects.

Amongſt the different orders of ſociety, there is ſuch an endleſs diverſity of ſituations, that no two perſons are placed exactly in the ſame condition; and on this account,

account, the inſtructions of ſcripture are infinitely varied, and the examples occaſionally ſuited to all the different ranks of life, and every diſpoſition of the ſoul. The figures before us, are ſuited to the feelings of every heart, where there exiſts ſentiments of anxiety and perturbation, ſimilar to thoſe which prevailed in that of Martha. Whatever are your circumſtances in the world, if you have unhappily admitted this diſquieting propenſity, conſider the ſiſters of Lazarus; and reflect upon *their conduct*, with a view to the improvement of *your own*. I will ſuppoſe that your intentions are well inclined, and that you are really deſirous of approving yourſelf to your Creator. For this very end, perhaps, you are troubled and careful. The wide field of obligations which extends before you, perplexes and confounds your diſordered imagination; and like Moſes, when com-

mended to ſpeak to Pharaoh in favour of the captive Iſraelites, you think you have no might to equal the exigencies of your allotted ſtation. Hence you are continually engaged in uneaſy calculations, concerning the probable conſequence of every ſtep you take, with reſpect to your temporal intereſt. While in this unbalanced ſtate of cautious apprehenſion, all the native efforts of real virtue and freedom are ſuſpended, and every action is the reſult of ſome capricious and inferiour motive. In this uncomfortable and agitated frame, your ſoul muſt reſemble the unballaſted veſſel, which lightly dances on the troubled ocean, for want of the weight which ſhould maintain its equipoiſe.

The utmoſt prudence cannot enſure ſucceſs to your plans; therefore, when you have adjuſted them to the beſt of your diſcernment, you muſt reſt their iſſue on a

ſuperior

ſuperior direction. When you have done your part, and provided whatever is requiſite for the accommodation of your friends, you may reaſonably diſmiſs all further attendance, and enjoy the comforts and edification of their ſociety. You may ſit at Jeſus' feet, and repoſe the event of things on him, who has expreſsly averred, "*that he careth for you.*"

It is not given to man in this probationary ſtate, to lift up that veil which the hand of Providence has drawn before all the incidents of futurity. The ſeeds of moral culture muſt, like the vegetable grain, be ſown with uncertainty in reſpect to the encreaſe which the enſuing harveſt will afford; and it is this ignorance of the reſult of our labours, which gives a ſcope to the exerciſe of the ſublimeſt faith, while a firm reliance on the Divine promiſes, calms the tumultuous fears of the Chriſtian, and regulates the

otherwiſe uneaſy ſuggeſtions of a doubtful mind.

All ſublunary purſuits are liable to diſappointment, and may draw down upon us reproof, where we expected approbation. But when we extend our ſchemes beyond the influence of this terreſtrial ſyſtem, and look for our reward in a better world, we ſhall find, that in our conformity to the Divine injunctions, we have "*choſen that good part which ſhall not be taken away from us.*" Yet it often happens, in taking the retroſpect of paſt actions, that we paſs cenſure rather according to their *preſent effects*, than their *original intention*; and the heart is apt to repent with more ſincerity of thoſe deeds which have had an unfortunate iſſue, than of ſuch as were of a vicious tendency.

It muſt on this occaſion be confeſſed, that with the generality of perſons, religion

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is more a matter of ſpeculation, than a ruling principle. God, they own to be the governor of the world at large, but they ſeldom recollect that he is the guide of their immediate concerns. They likewiſe allow that he rules the fate of empires, but when national events interfere with the line of their commercial dealings, or any way affect their domeſtic happineſs, the Divine agency is ſuperceded in their minds by other cauſes; and inſtead of being humbled under the chaſtiſing ſtroke of his adminiſtration, they think it is juſtifiable to fret with impatient anger at themſelves and others, as the only oſtenſible cauſe that their deſigns have proved abortive.

Nor is the Almighty treated with higher ideas of reſpect, in regard to the ſettlement of families, and their well doing in ſociety. In theſe moſt important concerns, Chriſtians commonly act with an atheiſtical negligence:

gence: they conſider all the chances that are likely to procure affluence and diſtinction, but it may be truly ſaid, "*God is not in all their thoughts.*" In the grand articles of education, and the ſubſequent eſtabliſhments of life, in forming the laſting connections of partnerſhip in buſineſs, or the deciſive engagement of the conjugal union, every attention is paid to intereſt and convenience, and all parties are "*careful and troubled about many things,*" but are frequently unanxious about "*the one thing needful.*" Little attention is paid to the moral effects, that may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to ariſe from the cloſe intimacies of theſe domeſtic relations, or the religious character of thoſe perſons, to whoſe particular influence and example, the manners of the riſing generation are entruſted. In truth, the cares of life are too often directed into wrong channels, and center on thoſe

objects

objects to which we ſhould be leaſt attentive. Men forget that the time of their continuance here is uncertain, and ſeem to think that "*their houſes ſhall continue for ever*," and are therefore anxious to "*call the lands after their own names*;" not conſidering, that the ſudden changes of human affairs, frequently ſubvert the moſt promiſing appearance of an eſtabliſhed felicity. It is therefore, both our duty and happineſs, when we have made a convenient proviſion for ourſelves and families, to diſmiſs every corroding care, and anxious ſolicitude, and ſeek with the pious Mary, that divine retreat, which Jeſus ſtill offers to his faithful votaries. And with a view to impreſs this truth, let me requeſt you, my friends, continued Mr. Worthington, to take a critical ſurvey of the piece before us. In the lines of Martha's countenance, how emphatically marked do we behold the fretful impatience

patience of her temper! Her ſituation is repreſented in no reſpect to have been different from that of her more placid ſiſter; and we are authorized to conclude, from our Lord's expreſs approbation, that Mary was equally deſirous of manifeſting towards him, her affection and reſpect, though the teſtimonies of her regard, were exhibited with greater ſatisfaction to herſelf, and leſs acrimony to her companions. Her attitude is that of humility; ſhe is placed at Jeſus' feet; her features expreſs attention, but her raiſed eyes, directed to the Redeemer, exhibit an abſolute model of adoration; while the looks of her Divine Inſtructor, replete with the benignity of condeſcending majeſty, are diverted from her by the abrupt interrogation of the repining Martha, on whom, likewiſe, the looks of the ſurrounding diſciples are fixed, with an indication of ſurprize. But in how unfa-

vourable

vourable a point of view muſt any character appear, if we ſeize the likeneſs during the prevalence of a wrong impreſſion! If Martha's viſage is here clouded with the ſullen frown of diſſatisfaction and diſpleaſure, it proceeds only from the workings of one evil propenſity. She is drawn, in other places of Scripture, as a religious, an amiable, and exemplary woman. She is denominated the friend of Chriſt, and with Lazarus and Mary ſhe ſhares in his eſteem, for it is poſitively mentioned, that Jeſus loved *Martha*, as well as her brother and ſiſter; and although ſhe is here diſcompoſed by the petulance of a hurried ſpirit, you may hereafter behold her face again, overſpread, indeed, with the ſorrows of affliction, but ſoftened with all the graces of ſenſibility and ſiſterly love. May we not, therefore, imbibe a leſſon of candour from this Scripture character? and when

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we behold theſe perſons who have a general reputation for worthineſs and reſpectability, acting in a manner that ſeems incompatible with the good reputation they have obtained, ſhould we not kindly ſuppoſe it is only a temporary deviation, which their better judgment will condemn; and by charitably concealing their imperfection, ſpare them the ſhame of public cenſure. We are all of us, in ſome degree, and upon ſome occaſions, prone to Martha's failing. Let us remark how unpleaſingly it contracts the features, and how diſguſting appears the lowering brow of diſcontent. The Almighty Creator, who abhors hypocriſy, has made the face to be a faithful index of the ſoul, and if the art of man does ſometimes conceal its ſecret emotions, yet the ſtrength of *inward* paſſion, eaſily ſhines through the *outward* veil of affectation, and ſhews its impreſſions undiſguiſed. Let this conſideration incite

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us to become ſuch as we deſire to appear; inſtead of affecting the ſemblance of popular virtues, let us cultivate their genuine graces. An even and placid temper, is the greateſt of all ſocial recommendations. It may ſometimes be the effect of fortunate circumſtances, or the reſult of animal ſpirits; but theſe are tranſient foundations, which accident may deſtroy, and time will undermine. That goodneſs of diſpoſition alone is unchangeable, which ariſes from a conſcientious ſentiment of religious obedience, and derives its ſtability from a certain aſſurance of God's omniſcience, and an immoveable reliance on his Divine protection. If we are deſirous of preſerving our integrity and peace of mind, we muſt reſolve to have but one Maſter, for if our chief deſign is to pleaſe men, it will affect our conduct with all their capricious variations. The vicious will expect compli-

ances

ances that cannot accord with rectitude, and the good will be equally diſpleaſed by every ſacrifice that is made at ſuch an expence. If men will entangle themſelves in the labyrinth of erroneous maxims, they have no right to complain that their paths are intricate. There is marked out a ſtraight line of duty, "*thou ſhalt fear the Lord, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.*" The world may be unjuſt in its cenſures, or miſinformed in its opinion: enemies may oppoſe, or friends may perplex you: outward circumſtances may appear in your diſfavour, or inward weakneſſes combine to aggravate your diſtreſs: but if with Mary, you ſtill continue your ſtation at Jeſus' feet, and fix your eye ſteadily on him, the light of his countenance, and the ſupports of his ineffable grace, will enable you to wait with patience, the concluſion of your mortal courſe,

courſe, and in advancing towards it, to "*go on your way rejoicing.*"

It was uſual with Mr. Worthington, when he had finiſhed his manuſcript, to put it into his coat pocket; and he did ſo on this evening, but ſoon after, in taking out his handkerchief, the papers which were rolled together, were drawn out with it, and fell unnoticed to the ground. They were picked up by his nephew, a lively boy of about fourteen, who had been with him a few days on a viſit. He returned them immediately, but in ſo doing he accidentally perceived that the lines of the outer page were particularly ſhort, and ſmilingly aſked his uncle, whether he had not cheated the company of ſome verſes, with which the evening lecture ſhould have concluded? This queſtion engaged every body's attention, and Mr. Worthington was ſolicited on all ſides, to recite the poetry. He

ſaid

ſaid thoſe ſtanzas had not ſufficient merit to bear a ſerious peruſal; but as they had been ſet to muſic, and Mrs. Mitford had ſometimes done him the honour to ſing them, if harmonized by the aid of her vocal and inſtrumental powers, he had no objection to ſubmit to the opinion of his friends, what he had written in ſickneſs. With this requeſt Mrs. Mitford was importuned to comply; and ſhe readily agreed to the propoſal, on condition that Mr. Worthington himſelf, who was a proficient in muſic, ſhould accompany her on the organ. The adjoining apartment was the muſic room, and as it immediately communicated with the picture gallery, the folding doors between them were thrown open, and the following lines ſung in concert, to a ſtrain ſo ſacred and melodious, that it inſpired the audience both with pleaſure and devotion.

REFLECTIONS IN SICKNESS.

ALL gracious Lord, whoſe ſov'reign pow'r,
By ſickneſs keeps me here confin'd;
I bleſs thy mercies ev'ry hour,
While thus ſecluded from mankind.

Thy wiſdom ſtrikes the erring heart,
Too much enſlav'd by worldly care,
That it may chuſe the *better part*,
When forc'd from buſineſs to forbear.

Loſt is the taſte for things divine,
Amidſt the various ſcenes of life;
From duty oft the beſt decline,
While mixing in its anxious ſtrife.

Troubled about too *many things*,
The pious Martha left her Lord:
Thus ev'ry ſtate temptation brings,
Unleſs the mind with grace is ſtor'd.

Then let me joyfully retreat,
To favor'd Mary's choſen place;
And ſitting at my Saviour's feet,
His word with willingneſs embrace.

There, knowledge from its fountain flows;
There, ſacred truth unmixt is found;
The ſinner there, oppreſs'd with woes,
Finds pardon, peace, and health abound.

Though now exalted to his throne,
JESUS with pitying ear attends
The piercing penitential groan,
Which from a contrite heart aſcends.

Still will he ſooth the mourning ſaint,
Oppreſs'd with terror and diſeaſe;
Who though his efforts are but faint,
In earneſt ſeeks his Lord to pleaſe.

"Then why art thou ſo much caſt down?"
Why ſinks my ſoul beneath its load?
Should Heav'n and Earth appear to frown,
Man may rely upon his God.

PAINT-

PICTURE, No. V.

JOSEPH'S RECEPTION OF HIS FATHER IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN.

From GENESIS, Chap. xlvi. Ver. 29.

And Joseph made ready his Chariot, and went up to meet Israel his Father, to Goshen; and presented himself unto him: and he fell on his Neck, and wept on his Neck a good while.

AMONGST the many intereſting events which occur in the lives of Iſrael and his ſon Joſeph, there is not one, perhaps, which more forcibly affects us, than their reunion in Egypt, after ſo long and cruel a ſeparation. When we conſider the meeting of theſe affectionate relations, and the afflictions they had formerly endured; when we recollect the ardent tenderneſs, and tedious ſervitude of Jacob for his beloved Rachel, with the ſuppoſed loſs of this darling pledge and firſt fruit of their union; and think how many years the wretched father had mourned for him in all the bitterneſs of parental regret; and further, when we view the parties as men of ſenſibility and heroic virtue, what muſt we ſuppoſe their emotions to have been, while locked in this rapturous embrace, Joſeph "*fell on his father's neck, and wept on his neck a good while.*" This was ſuch a moment

of

of tranſport as is ſeldom experienced; and can only be felt by thoſe who have undergone the previous diſcipline of ſevere affliction.—It is from great and unexpected viciſſitudes of joy or ſorrow, that the paſſions are excited to their utmoſt ſtretch, and the expreſſive countenance indicates to the ſpectators, the unreſtrained emotions of the heart. The common routine of ordinary life, yields but few materials to the pen of the Hiſtorian, to the Poet's muſe, or to the Painter's art; but the *ſublime* objects of nature, afford a more ample ſcope for the diſplay of their ſeveral talents.

What a ſucceſſion of joyful and tumultuous ſenſations ſeem to ruſh on the ſoul of the venerable Patriarch, while he recognizes the maturity of thoſe opening graces, which had formerly diſtinguiſhed his ſtripling ſon, whoſe image has been indelibly impreſſed on his imagination, and whoſe coat of

many colours he had probably preſerved as a token of affectionate remembrance.

The emotions of Joſeph appear to have had a mixture of grief, on perceiving the alteration that years and misfortunes had wrought in his father's frame, and at ſeeing thoſe grey hairs which his loſs had nearly brought "*with ſorrow to the grave*;" and though his noble mind ſoared above all reſentment of his brother's treachery with reſpect to himſelf, it is probable he experienced a ſentiment of indignation at their inſenſibility to the ſufferings of ſuch a parent. Theſe ideas naturally excited thoſe affectionate tears which flowed with irreſiſtible violence while he hung upon his father's neck; and Iſrael, conſcious of his ſon's ſuperior worth, and ſuſceptible of this proof of filial tenderneſs, eſteemed it the happieſt moment of his life, and wiſhed it might conclude with ſuch a delightful interview. "*Now*

let me die, ſince I have ſeen thy face, becauſe thou art yet alive." In conſidering this meeting of the patriarchs Jacob and Joſeph, we cannot but admire the delightful union of fortitude and ſenſibility in their reſpective characters. They had both ſhewn, under a variety of trying circumſtances, the moſt elevated patience and pious reſignation: and whenever we hear of their having wept, it was on occaſions ſimilar to the preſent; ſuch, as when Jacob was reconciled to Eſau, and when Joſeph, on making himſelf known to his brethren, pathetically enquired after his father's health. Indeed, the Painter who ſhould repreſent a perſon deſigned as an heroic character, as weeping at his *own* afflictions, would greatly leſſen the effect, and abate both the ſympathy and admiration of the ſpectator: but the unaffected tear of ſenſibility gliſtens with an almoſt divine effulgence, when it trembles in the

eye of one whoſe heart is truly magnanimous. Thus does it ſeem, while Joſeph weeps upon the neck of his father; and thus did it afterwards appear in his great proto-type, when Jeſus wept at the grave of Lazarus.—Joſeph is equal to every emergency of difficulty or of danger. He has the wiſdom to foreſee the approach of evil, and ſteadineſs to provide againſt it; and is neither to be intimidated by the threats of impending misfortune, or ſurprized with the allurements of laſcivious pleaſure.

The ſentiments of religion are in all ſituations equally prevalent in his mind; and the language of his heart is the ſame to every temptation that occurs,—"*How can I do this great wickedneſs and ſin againſt God?*" The ſeeds of piety had been early ſown by his excellent father; and meeting with a favorable ſoil, had ſprung up without

further

further culture in his mind, in ſpite of the unfavorable circumſtances that attended his youth. This ſhould be an encouragement to parents, and incline them to inculcate religious principles in their children, before they diſmiſs them into a world of wickedneſs. There is no certainty how long the parents may have the opportunity to do ſo, nor what events may riſe in future life to try the force of their children's integrity: but when they have laid the beſt foundation which their abilities admit, and commended their offspring to the care of Providence, they may ſafely truſt the iſſue to that protecting power, who led the patriarch's ſon through a ſucceſſion of trials and dangers, and conducted him at length, in virtue and honor, to the ſummit of temporal felicity.

It is not to be expected, indeed, that the moſt aſſiduous endeavours, or the beſt education, will be attended with the like tem-

poral proſperity. But where *the fear of God* is made the governing motive of conduct, thoſe who are not bleſſed with the ſatisfaction of ſuch an affectionate meeting as Jacob experienced in the land of Goſhen, will yet find the reward of one more extatic in the regions of bliſs, and rejoice in an inſeparable union in the New Jeruſalem.

In whatever light we conſider the behaviour of Joſeph, it preſents us with an example of ſuperior merit. It ſets before us a perſon of high abilities, exerting his talents in a ſuitable manner, under all the viciſſitudes of life. It ſhews us that the moſt heroic virtues are perfectly conſiſtent with the gentleſt affections; and that in the oppoſite extremes of proſperity and adverſity, the fear of God will be the direction of the one, and the ſupport of the other.

What a leſſon of fortitude may we learn from this illuſtrious ſufferer, who was ſo

ſeverely

ſeverely exerciſed in the ſchool of affliction! How many agents of malignity and ingratitude, ſucceſſively deſtroyed his peace! At home, the envy of his brethren expoſed him a wretched exile from his paternal ſeat; and when his amiable qualities had procured him an eſtabliſhment in the houſe of the Egyptian officer, the illicit paſſion of his deteſtable miſtreſs, again plunged him into captivity and diſgrace. But even through the gloom of a dungeon his virtues reflected new light; and the keeper of the priſon exalted him to the higheſt ſtation of authority, in that melancholy manſion of diſtreſs. The talents of Joſeph were formed to command: and though poverty and unmerited diſgrace might occaſionally *depreſs*, they could not *enſlave* his mind, nor veil the active qualities which diſtinguiſh his character. In this loweſt ſtate of abaſement, friendleſs and alone, he did not give way

to dejection. He relied on Providence; and with an intrepid reſolution, he exerted his own efforts for his advantage. Unſubdued by calamity, he baffled her moſt deſperate attacks with encreaſing magnanimity, and depended on the God of his fathers for the reward of his integrity. Can the rigid virtue of Cato admit of compariſon with this Scripture hero, who in the bloom of youth, and in the lonelineſs of undeſerved confinement, could ſupport the diſtreſſes of a hopeleſs exiſtence, and be ſtill himſelf, collected, uſeful, and reſigned? Theſe are the triumphs of true piety. Had Cato's mind been illuminated with the light of revelation, Rome would never have recorded him as an illuſtrious ſuicide.

The example of the ſtoic philoſopher, ſhews a proud and ſullen deſpair: that of the pious Hebrew is a calm, ſteady confidence in the diſpoſal of Heaven; with an

enlivening

enlivening hope, that "*light would yet ſpring up for the righteous, and joyful gladneſs for ſuch as are true hearted.*"

In the darkeſt ſeaſons of diſtreſs, let us remember Joſeph in the priſon of Egypt, and conſider whether our proſpect can be more diſcouraging than his appeared. If we are ſunk into indigence, can our poverty have laid us lower than a dungeon? If we are bereft of friends, can we be more deſtitute than the man who was baniſhed from every connection? If we are aſperſed by enemies, Joſeph was infamouſly defamed by thoſe who could have atteſted his virtue, and ſeems to have been tried by almoſt every ſpecies of mortification and diſtreſs; while his moſt rational expectations of relief, like his hopes from the deluſive promiſes of Pharaoh's chief butler, for a long time met nothing but ill ſucceſs. Nor let us be diſcouraged with the idea, that we are ap-

parently uſeleſs to our friends and to ſociety, and may therefore, like the Roman chief, quit that poſt we can no longer maintain with advantage.

The deſigns of Providence are beyond the reach of our comprehenſion. Who could have appeared of leſs conſequence in the world, or leſs able to promote the welfare of his family, than the captive Joſeph, whom that family had deſerted, and whoſe father already ſuppoſed him dead? But forgotten by every one in a foreign land, he was yet remembered by an Almighty friend, who had appointed this neglected exile to be the guide of Pharaoh, the ſaviour of Egypt, and *the preſerver of his father's houſe*.

Hitherto we have taken but a retroſpective view of the life of Joſeph; let us now ſurvey with attention the particular ſcene which the painter has exhibited. He

has

has given the ſurrounding country, though on the borders of the fruitful land of Goſhen, a barren and deſolate appearance, correſponding with the idea of a long famine, which is not yet near its termination. But there is great judgment as well as nicety diſcernible in the artful arrangement of his colours. It is not one of the wild and ſavage ſcenes, ſometimes drawn by the admirable pencil of Salvator Roſa, where a group of banditti ſuit the natural aſpect of the place. The Egyptian landſcape appears rather mournful than terrific:—it is that of a land blaſted by an immediate ſtroke of deſolation, where every thing vegetable bears a brown or yellow caſt, as if burned up by the unpropitious drought of the ſeaſon. The ſpreading palms droop their majeſtic heads, and the ſcattered leaves of the vine ſeem to have fallen for want of moiſture. The diſtant fields of paſture with which

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the country abounds, have rather the tint of ſtubble than of verdure, and the foliage of the trees appear—

" Parched in the bud, and withered e'er their prime."

Yet notwithſtanding this unfavorable repreſentation of natural objects, the painter has contrived to render his picture intereſting by its judicious diſpoſition.

His principal figures receive the ſtrongeſt light, and are thrown forward with conſiderable ſkill, by the artful arrangement of their ſituation. The ſtill beautiful, though now manly countenance of Joſeph, forms a delightful contraſt to the hoary head and venerable face of his reſpected father, who fondly retains the hand of his ſon, though he ſeems in the act of retreating a ſtep from him, that as he riſes from weeping on his neck, he may gaze anew upon his beloved and majeſtic features. The pencil is in

this

this inſtance more expreſſive than language: it ſhews the patriarch's feelings when his emotion had deprived him of the power of ſpeech; and forcibly repreſents that joy which was too ſtrong for words to utter. The ſacred hiſtorian does not relate one ſentence to have eſcaped the lips of Joſeph; and Iſrael's addreſs is only a ſudden burſt of exclamation, the voice of paſſion rather than of reaſon: "*Now let me die ſince I have ſeen thy face, becauſe thou art yet alive.*" Thus the fear of again loſing his recovered treaſure, made him willing to relinquiſh it immediately. What a convincing proof does this afford, that the higheſt worldly enjoyment, is but vanity! for even at the moment when expectation was fulfilled, and tranſport wound up to its utmoſt pitch, the tears which accompanied his rapture, ſtrongly evince its imperfection. With what exactneſs is this deſcription of

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the inſpired writer copied from nature! How ſimple, yet how touching to every reader! Not all the multiplied figures of rhetoric could have ſo forcibly declared the overflowings of paternal affection as this ſhort apoſtrophe. But let us do more than admire the ſtyle of the narration, and the beauties of the painting: let us conſider the chearing influence it ſhould have on our thoughts, and what effect it ought to produce on our actions. The ſame God who led Joſeph through all the viciſſitudes he experienced while ſeparate from his father, is ſtill the God of the whole earth, and can make proſperity ſucceed to adverſity, by means as wonderful and unexpected, as thoſe which brought about Joſeph's advancement. If, therefore, he has endued us with talents which ſeem at preſent to have no ſcope for exertion, let us cultivate them with an humble hope, that they may in the courſe of time,

become

become uſeful to ourſelves and to our fellow creatures. Whether in a ſtate of confinement or of liberty, of ſervitude or of command, let a fear of offending him, and a ſenſe of his preſence, always act upon our minds as a reſtraint from evil. The whole hiſtory of Joſeph is remarkably adapted as an example to young perſons; and this particular ſcene of it, may ſerve to encourage them when quitting the paternal roof, in order to engage at a diſtance from home, in the buſtle and buſineſs of life. For though they ſhould be long divided, it may excite them to cheriſh the remembrance of their abſent parents, and to animate their hearts with the expectation of a happy reunion.

If, like Joſeph, they are actuated by a principle of true religion, they will find it a ſupport under the various temptations of an enſnaring world; and if they yield themſelves

ſelves to the impreſſions of Divine grace, their conduct will inſpire both approbation and delight to their near connexions, when it ſhall be the will of Providence to reſtore them to their embraces. How ſweet will then prove the tears of filial love, when they flow unmingled with conſcious ſhame or internal reproach! when the retroſpect of the paſt is unſtained by guilt, and unclouded by remorſe, and all the nobler affections are gratified by a pleaſure which it is virtue to indulge! Nor is this delightful picture before us, a leſs pleaſing object of contemplation to thoſe whoſe grey hairs are bending with ſorrow to the grave. You, my aged friends, may obſerve, that "*faithful is he who hath promiſed.*" Though, therefore, you have had much affliction and many trials, yet "*there is hope in thine end, ſaith the Lord, that thy children ſhall come again to their own border.*"

If

If in adverſity you have ſometimes exclaimed like Jacob, "*all theſe things are againſt me*," yet you may reflect, that after he had for many years ſuppoſed the death of his ſon, God at length conducted him to his embraces in Goſhen: and you may live to ſee the exaltation, and rejoice in the honors of your offspring who you formerly deſpaired of rearing; or may be made happy by other as deſirable, but equally unexpected occurrences. But above all, as has been before hinted, let us, as *Chriſtians*, conſider the ſight of Joſeph thus advanced to wealth and dominion in Egypt, but as a *ſecondary* object; ſince the time muſt inevitably come, when the happieſt meeting upon earth, will be followed by a *final* ſeparation. Let then the young and the old, be induced to place their expectations on a better union; not in the realm of Pharaoh, but in the kingdom of

their

their heavenly Father, where our great Forerunner is already entered; and though he ſuffered upon earth by the malice of the wicked, he is yet ſent before us of God, to preſerve to us eternal life. May we tread in his ſteps, imitate his example, and ſuffering with his humility and patience, be crowned with an immortal reward!

This portion of Sacred Hiſtory, is likewiſe an appoſite inſtance to warn abſent friends from the indulgence of a too anxious curioſity reſpecting each other's fate at the moment. Had Jacob, when he mourned the death of his ſon, been able, as perhaps he would have wiſhed, to diſcern the true ſtate of things; to have known the treachery and barbarity of his elder ſons, as exerciſed towards his beloved Joſeph; or to have ſeen his picture either in the pit, the houſe of Potiphar, or the ſtate priſon of Egypt, his years of ſorrow and

regret

regret muſt have been rendered more acutely painful. When, therefore, we are tempted to repine at our ſhort-ſightedneſs, and the ignorance we are kept in reſpecting the fate of diſtant, but beloved objects, let us check the inquiſitive ſolicitude which is detrimental to happineſs, and learn to be ſubmiſſive and content under every diſpenſation of Providence.

The painting before us, though it is ſtrictly deſcriptive only of a ſcene of *private* felicity, is likewiſe calculated to inſpire reflections that will lead to much confidence and hope in God, even beneath the preſſure of *public* calamity. The dignified appearance and ſplendid retinue of Joſeph, naturally remind us of his eminent and important ſtation, which gave him the power of ſending for his father and family, to ſhare the bleſſings of a country, preſerved from deſtruction, by his wiſe and

prudent

prudent adminiſtration. "*The Lord's hand is not ſhortened that it cannot ſave*," and the talents and foreſight with which it pleaſed him to endow this patriarch for the benefit of Egypt and the ſurrounding country, may be, and will be again conferred on thoſe, whom it ſhall pleaſe him to appoint, as inſtruments for the deliverance of his people.

But in order to co-operate with this deſign, Subjects muſt yield obedience to their Rulers; otherwiſe they will loſe the advantage of good government, though it ſhould be divinely aſſiſted. If the people refuſe to comply with the orders of their lawful governors, whether in ſtations of civil or military command, it is impoſſible they ſhould be ſaved by the exertions either of their wiſdom or valour. Had the Egyptians perverſely ſcorned Joſeph's admonition, and during the ſeven years of

plenty

plenty refuſed to lay up the ſuperabundance of grain, they muſt have afterwards ſtarved in conſequence of their rebellious folly. Or had they tumultuouſly deſtroyed their reſources, inſtead of ſelling them to Pharaoh, the miraculous dream which foretold the approaching famine would have been in vain, and the ſalutary proviſion made by the prime miniſter to provide againſt it, muſt have proved equally ineffectual. Whether, therefore, we find ourſelves in circumſtances of perſonal diſtreſs, or of general danger and alarm, let us be conſtantly obedient to the laws of God; in no caſe ſeeking redreſs by violent and unjuſtifiable means, but with ſteady and regular exertions, committing ourſelves to him in well doing, as to a faithful Creator. In the mean ſeaſon we muſt not be impatient, but allow time for the great artiſt properly to apply colours that are required in the compoſition of

thoſe events, which ſhall hereafter decide the fortune of individuals, and the fate of nations; truſting with perfect confidence, that in the progreſs of the work, every tint will harmonize, ſo as to produce the moſt admirable effect.

Truſt then the pencil to His able hands,
Who its great art completely underſtands;
The HEAV'NLY PAINTER will with ſkill divine,
Order, and grace, and ſymmetry combine:
Nor think, that *He* can *man*'s direction need,
Whoſe *ſlighteſt* ſketch his higheſt powers exceed.
As yet the *outline* only can you ſee;
Yet every ſtroke is bold, and fair, and free:
Or if ſome things like blemiſhes appear,
They will hereafter a freſh aſpect wear.
What ſeems imperfect now, will ſhortly raiſe,
Full approbation and adoring praiſe;
When the aſſembled Univerſe ſhall own,
The picture could be done by GOD ALONE.

It

It was now the end of autumn, and the heat had for ſome days been uncommon at that ſeaſon. Black clouds were gathering in the horizon, and ſome of the party aſſembled at the hall, ſaid, that it thundered; but as the ſound was at firſt indiſtinctly heard, its reality was diſputed by others. At length, however, the darkneſs encreaſed: the livid and quick ſucceeding flaſhes of lightning, were followed by the undoubted roar of diſtant thunder; which, after a time, raged to the higheſt degree, rolling onward in hoarſe and awful murmurs, till it broke with crackling peals, as if directly over the roof of Mr. Worthington's houſe. Some of his gueſts were affrighted, particularly the two Miſs Norcotes, who hid their faces with their hands, and ſometimes uttered ſudden ſcreams at the ſound of the contending elements. Several of the younger gentlemen politely endeavoured to remove

their fears, by the aſſurance that they were ſecure from danger; while their brother Theodore and Sir Lewis Mandeville ſmiled with contemptuous indifference; the former reproving them in a tone more angry than affectionate, for giving way to what he termed the ridiculous weakneſs of childiſh apprehenſion; till his ſiſter Louiſa, ſomewhat irritated, and really terrified, could no longer reſtrain her tears. Mr. Worthington then ſat down by her, and gently taking her hand, ſuggeſted, that though the report of the thunder which ſeemed moſtly to alarm her, was certainly tremendous, yet that the danger aroſe from the lightning which preceded it, and ſhot like the flaſh of fire from a piſtol, before the noiſe announced its diſcharge to the ear. I will not attempt, ſaid he, to miſlead you, by ſaying there is no probability of accidents from ſuch a ſtorm as this, ſince experience often proves

proves the contrary: but we may reaſonably hope it will be attended with no evil effects to us, as this houſe has the advantage of *conductors* placed at different parts of it, one end of each of which goes down into the ground, and the upper end terminates in a ſharp point, near ſix feet above the top of the higheſt chimney. Theſe metal rods will gradually draw down the lightning from the thunder cloud now over our heads to the earth, and thus prevent it from accumulating to endanger the houſe by breaking upon it. But ſuppoſing the cloud to be ſo overcharged as ſuddenly to burſt, the rod will attract all the lightning, and conduct it into the ground, where it will harmleſsly diſperſe into the moiſt earth, and the houſe will receive no injury. This is a moſt excellent and uſeful method of preſervation, and the world is much indebted to divine Providence for having inſpired Dr. Franklin

with the invention, and to him for making it public.—Every one muſt agree to that, ſaid Mr. Wentworth; but I think, my good friend, you have uſed an expreſſion, which, though common, is not ſtrictly philoſophical. A pointed conductor which communicates with the earth, has not any particular power of *drawing down*, or attracting electricity; it acts only as any other conducting ſubſtance, which does not reſiſt the paſſage of the electric fluid.—I ſubſcribe to the correctneſs of your obſervation, replied Mr. Worthington, as to the techinal impropriety of my argument; yet I dare ſay you will admit, that electricity paſſes with more eaſe from an electrified body to a conductor which is pointed, than to one which is flat or globular; and that, not from any particular property in the point, but in the ſtate of the electrified cloud, which cauſes it to part with its electricity

eaſier, and from a greater diſtance, when a pointed conducting ſubſtance is preſented to it, than it does to a flat or globular one.

Philoſophic reaſoning has little efficacy to divert natural terror, encreaſed by ignorance, and ſometimes encouraged through affectation; and though that was not *now* the caſe with the truly terrified Louiſa, yet, both ſhe and her ſiſter were deſtitute of the beſt foundation of fortitude and tranquillity, that which ariſes from a deep ſenſe of religion, and a firm perſuaſion of the overruling providence of God. They had never enjoyed the benefit of maternal inſtruction; were more celebrated for *beauty* than *ſound* underſtanding; more *outwardly* accompliſhed than *internally* pious: And though their male friends expected from them a conſiſtent and rational conduct, they had never taken the pains to inculcate the *principles* upon which alone it can be

founded. Mr. Worthington, on the contrary, who knew and pitied their ſituation in this reſpect, treated them with that candour which ever flows from an enlightened and chriſtian ſpirit. He led their minds to ſerious reflections, by hinting to them the ſuperintending care of the Almighty, to temper the awe which his power excited. At the ſame time taking occaſion to remark on the proper fear due to a Being who can direct the whole artillery of nature, againſt ſuch as offend him, or cauſe the tempeſt to work deliverance for his ſervants. Conſider, my dear young friends, ſaid he, if you are now ſo much alarmed, what "*a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God:*" and though we have no cauſe to be diſturbed by the commotion of the elements, becauſe we are ſafe at all times in the protection of Him to whom they are ſubject: yet let us

not

not forget that the time will aſſuredly come, when by ſome means or other Death will reach us, and we muſt enter upon the eternal world: it will therefore be highly irrational to be afraid of the ſound of his *thunder*, which at moſt can only kill the body, and not to fear "*Him who can caſt both body and ſoul into hell.*" There is no occaſion for earthquakes, ſtorms, or peſtilence, to finiſh ſuddenly our mortal career, ſince every day affords ſome inſtance, that Death is a "ſlow, treacherous miner, working in the dark," and may without external violence come upon us unexpectedly; ſo that, as the ſame poet forcibly expreſſes it, thoſe that ſeem

"The fartheſt from the *fear*,
"Are often neareſt to the *ſtroke* of Fate."

During the time ſpent in theſe obſervations, others of the party were occupied

with admiring the varying lights and ſhades as they happened, during the ſtorm, to fall upon the ſeveral pictures in the gallery. A capital painting of Chriſt's Agony in the garden, was in this inſtance noted as remarkable, the lightning's glare giving to it a moſt brilliant and beautiful appearance, and ſeeming particularly to illuminate that part of the piece, repreſenting the ſupernatural light which accompanied the deſcent of the Angel; reflecting, as it were, its bright celeſtial rays upon the divine countenance of the kneeling Meſſiah, and producing altogether a moſt ſplendid, though tranſient effect. As the tempeſt abated, the converſation became general. Mr. Mitford declared the picture above-mentioned to be one of the moſt intereſting he had ever ſeen; one it was impoſſible to ſurvey without emotion. There is, ſaid he, ſuch a mixture of meekneſs and ma-

jeſty

jeſty blended with agony in the face of the Redeemer, and ſo much anxious and tender ſympathy, and as it ſhould ſeem, adoring aſtoniſhment in the ſeraphic form of the angel, that I never look at it without feeling myſelf greatly affected.—I think, ſaid Mr. Laſcelles, every part of the picture may claim its ſhare of praiſe. The back ground is compoſed with particular taſte and judgment, and its ſtrong maſs of ſhadow has a fine effect on the delicate and beautiful complexion of the heavenly Meſſenger; while fainter tints are properly oppoſed to that of his great Maſter, towards whom he is bending forward with an aſpect of ſubmiſſive attention and reſpect. Colonel Hoare, likewiſe, added his warm commendation, and aſked Mr. Worthington whether he had by him any written remarks upon this admirable painting, which he ſuppoſed to be a production of Raphael's.

Mr. Worthington ſaid, it was purchaſed under that idea, by a friend who had preſented him with it; but it was not, in his opinion, the work of ſo eminent a maſter: he rather aſcribed it to one of his diſciples, he meant Penni Giovanni Franciſco, an eminent Italian, who died in the fifteenth century, and by whom a great many things were executed that paſſed for Raphael's. Mr. Worthington acknowledged that when the painting was firſt given him, he had made ſome ſerious reflections upon the ſubject; and being requeſted to produce them for the edification of the company, he obligingly complied.

PICTURE,

PICTURE, No. VI.

Christ's Agony in the Garden.

From Luke, Chap. xxii. Verſes 43, 44.

And there appeared an Angel unto him ſtrengthening him.

And being in an Agony, he prayed more earneſtly: and his Sweat was as it were great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground.

IF I venture, ſaid Mr. Worthington, to attempt this awful picture of our Lord's paſſion, it is with the deepeſt reverence and timidity; and my heart on this occaſion, exclaims with Young,

"Fly ye prophane, or elſe draw near with awe."

However, as the ſacred writers have ſo minutely drawn the circumſtances of this important event, we may be allowed to contemplate the ſolemn ſcene, with ſuitable and devout affections.

It diſplays to us, in mournful majeſty, the opening terrors of that grand tranſaction, in which every human ſoul is ſo eternally intereſted. It ſhews us the great Redeemer of mankind, retiring from his diſciples, after having given them his laſt benediction, and inſtituted the ſolemn memorial of his death, which was to be con-

tinued,

tinued, as a token of his covenant with all his followers, to the end of time.

With what mingled emotions of affection, ſympathy, terror, and reſignation, does the mind of our Divine Maſter appear to have been agitated at this awful moment, when the other diſciples being left at a farther diſtance, he quitted his three tendereſt friends, after having expreſſed to them the painful ſenſations that oppreſſed him, and deſired them to watch with him the approach of his expected enemies.

He knew that "*the time was now come,*" when his final ſufferings were to commence: and if the anticipation of evil may be deemed, as it certainly is, one of the ſevereſt trials of this tranſitory ſtate, Chriſt experienced its horrors in their utmoſt extent. Yet when the generality of men anticipate the ſtroke of affliction, they are commonly in a ſtate of ſuch uncertainty,

as

as permits the allays of *hope* to intermingle with *fear:* but our bleſſed Saviour, who voluntarily undertook the work of redemption, was certain that no doubts remained of the full execution of his predicted ſufferings, and was aware of the whole bitterneſs of the cup of evil which was prepared for him, though reſolved to exhauſt it to the laſt drop.

Confuſion and anxiety of mind, uſually precede our firſt entrance on high undertakings, eſpecially when they are attended with danger. This perturbation is much encreaſed where there is any diffidence of ſucceſs. Jeſus had a firm truſt that he ſhould come off conqueror: yet might he feel the weight of bodily weakneſs oppreſsing his mind. That it did ſo, appears evident from its viſible effects on his outward frame. His ſweat and fainting, were ſigns of natural terror, and the ſtrongeſt poſſible

indications

indications of predominant anguiſh. Perhaps his ſoul might at that moment be agitated with doubts of his own fortitude. It was certainly impreſſed with a full view of the importance of redemption, and the mighty conſequence of the taſk he had undertaken.

All *trial* ſeems to infer a *poſſibility* of being *foiled:* and as abſolute confidence cannot properly exiſt before victory, might not even the Meſſiah himſelf experience amongſt the reſt of his ſufferings, that exquiſite anxiety which precedes the deciſion of the greateſt events? It is true, our Lord was not ſubject to any ſins of humanity, and he had a due reliance on his divine powers; yet as he partook of the innocent weakneſſes of mortality, and "*was in all points tempted like as we*" are, is it not likely that he ſhould be perplexed with the ſuſpence of his perilous and aweful ſituation?

Let

Let not his followers then ſuppoſe they are forſaken of Heaven, when they find themſelves caſt down under the proſpect of impending calamity, ſince their Redeemer has experienced ſuch feelings before them. The moſt conſiderate minds are ever the greateſt ſufferers from their acute ſenſibility, though no unfounded apprehenſions can be ſuppoſed to have aggravated the terrors of the Son of God, as he had no doubt concerning the truth of the prophecies reſpecting himſelf. But the bleſſed Jeſus knew that the malice of earth and hell were let looſe upon him, and that this was "*their hour and the power of darkneſs.*" That divine philanthropy which had engaged him to aſſume our nature, and was now leading him forward to the painful conſummation of his miniſtry, muſt have cauſed him ſeverely to feel all the agonies of diſappointment and regret; in the conviction,

viction, that many among the intended objects of his redeeming mercy, would yet reject his miſſion, and defeat, with reſpect to themſelves, the gracious purpoſe of his humiliation and ſuffering.

This was one of the keeneſt darts of that heavy affliction which made the Son of God to exclaim, that his "*ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death.*" It may, perhaps, excite our aſtoniſhment, when we reflect that men of common make, and of weaker ſpirits, without manifeſting any ſuch outward ſymptoms of mental agony, have courageouſly ſubmitted to a cruel execution. But that which to our Lord magnified its attendant horrors, beyond what any human powers can conceive, ſo that "*no ſorrow was like unto his ſorrow,*" muſt have been the conſciouſneſs of the Divine diſpleaſure at the wickedneſs of men, for whom, in obedience to the Father, he was

now

now about to ſuffer. Our ſenſe of the malignity of ſin, is always in proportion to the degree of our excellence. With what concern and abhorrence, therefore, muſt the immaculate Lamb of God have beheld the guilt of mankind, for whoſe remiſſion he had undertaken his mediatorial office? And it is further probable that he likewiſe experienced the moſt poignant agony from the ingratitude of the Jewiſh nation, whom he had previouſly conducted as the Angel of the covenant; and among whom he had ſpent the whole of his mortal life, in the ſevereſt labours for their converſion and happineſs. This ſeems to be the idea of the prophet Iſaiah in the xlixth chapter, and the 6th verſe, where ſpeaking in the perſon of Jehovah as comforting the Meſſiah, he ſays, "*It is a light thing that thou ſhouldeſt be my ſervant to raiſe up the tribes*

tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto the end of the earth."

To theſe important objects of anxiety, others may be added, whoſe influence muſt have had great force in ſuch a mind as that "*which was in Chriſt Jeſus.*" The generous and tender ſentiments of affection and friendſhip, though ſometimes diſregarded in compariſon with the more extenſive obligations of univerſal benevolence, and doing the will of his heavenly Father, were evidently prevalent in his ſoul. Theſe noble and powerful affections, can never have been ſuppoſed more intereſting than in this trying ſeaſon, when he knew that the unſteady faith of his diſciples, was about to ſuſtain ſo hard a trial; ſince his approaching death would not only deprive them of his converſation and perſonal

ſonal ſupport, but would be the deſtruction of all their hopes, which centered in a temporal deliverer, who ſhould at this time reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael.

When he beheld them, therefore, ſo ſluggiſh in underſtanding; and found that the eyes of their minds were as heavy as thoſe of their bodies, ſo that he could neither awaken the one to comprehend the nature of his miſſion, nor the other to watch with him the approach of the events which would conclude it; what lively emotions of compaſſion and diſtreſs muſt their ſituation have inſpired in his benevolent ſoul? He had juſt taken of thoſe beloved friends a laſt and affectionate farewel; but had not been able to impreſs their minds with the conviction of his expected diſſolution, although he had excited in their minds apprehenſions of approaching calamity, that rather ſtupified their ſenſes than

enlightened

enlightened their comprehenſion. Under theſe circumſtances our Lord knew that his trial and crucifixion muſt inevitably ſink their hopes into deſpair: and he foreſaw with grief, that as ſoon as he, the ſhepherd of his diſciples, ſhould be ſmitten, "*the ſheep of his flock would be ſcattered abroad.*"

It is natural for every perſon, but eſpecially ſuch as have lived in ſtations of eminence, to wiſh that their characters ſhould be tranſmitted in a favourable light to their ſurviving friends: how deeply painful, then, may we ſuppoſe it, to quit the objects of our tendereſt affection, under the ſtrongeſt appearances of impoſture and deceit, at a time too, when they are expoſed, through the ſincerity of their attachment, to the ſcorn of contempt, and the violence of perſecution.

This was the ſtate of our bleſſed Lord when he retired from his beloved diſciples,

to

to vent in ſolitude the anguiſh of his heart, and in a paroxyſm of agony which no words can expreſs, " *he fell on his face and prayed, ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible let this cup paſs from me: nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" Having thus, as it ſeems, in ſome meaſure lightened his diſtreſs by the exerciſe of fervent devotion, he went back to ſhare in the communication of friendſhip, but found his diſciples, and the zealous and profeſſing Peter among the reſt, ſo inſenſible of his ſufferings as to have fallen aſleep. With a gentle rebuke he thus reminds him who had made ſuch bold proteſtations of inviolable fidelity,—" *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?*" and then adding a general and needful caution,—" *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation,*" proceeds with all the candour of meekneſs, and the philoſophy of patience, to excuſe their inattention by the mild obſervation,

that

that the "*ſpirit indeed is willing though the fleſh is weak.*" The Divine ſufferer then "*went away again the ſecond time, and prayed, ſaying, O my Father, if this cup may not paſs from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them aſleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, ſaying the ſame words.*" How ſtrongly do theſe repeated entreaties to his heavenly Father, mark the violence of his encreaſing agony, while they ſhew us that prayer was *his* reſource in extremity, who had at his diſpoſal other means of relief. But although he declined not the "*miniſtration of an angel, who appeared from heaven ſtrengthening him,*" yet he never accepted any ſuch aſſiſtance to revenge the inſults, or free him from the malice of his enemies.

Let his afflicted followers, therefore, acquire piety and fortitude from his Divine example;

example; and be certain that ſome aid will always be vouchſafed to the good, under their ſoreſt trials; but they muſt, like their great Redeemer, continue their ſupplications for relief, and not expect deliverance too ſoon. They muſt *ſuffer* with Chriſt, before they can hope to *reign* with him, and like the Meſſiah, go through the whole conflict, ere it will be poſſible to obtain the reward.

In the mean time let them reflect, that God can ſuccour thoſe who truſt in him, by ways beſt ſuited to their exigence. The miniſtration of angels, though little underſtood, is certainly taught in many paſſages of Scripture, and it is pleaſing to reflect, that although they have ceaſed to aſſume a viſible appearance for the aſſiſtance of man, yet the world of ſpirits is replete with *good* as well as *evil* beings, ſo that we may hope to be ſtrengthened by the one, as long as

we

we continue expoſed to the temptations of the other.

From the awful and pathetic ſcene of the garden of Gethſemane, we may learn of our Divine Maſter, a variety of other important inſtructions; and his *agony* is a powerful ſource of encouragement to Chriſtians, eſpecially when they are diſpoſed to imagine themſelves deſerted by God, or incapable of reſiſting the powers of darkneſs. It teaches us, likewiſe, that retirement and prayer are always needful and efficacious preparatives to actions of peculiar importance, as they ſanctify the intended deed, call up the powers of fortitude and prudence, ſuggeſt ſuch motives of conduct as will be our direction, and like centinels on the watch, guard us from the ſurprize of unexpected accidents.

Whereas, when without due conſideration, we ruſh into the engagement, our ſouls,

like an ill-diſciplined army, are overcome by the violence of the firſt onſet, and having no opportunity of ſeaſonable thought, find it difficult to rally their diſordered powers, ſo that the leaſt breach occaſions a defeat. Had Simon Peter, in this inſtance, followed the *example* of his Maſter, he had probably never *denied* him: but his ardent ſpirit loſt its firmneſs, and was overborne by the ſudden ſhock of temptation, whoſe impetuous torrent hurried him away with unexpected violence.

Our Saviour never depended ſo far on the prophecies reſpecting himſelf, as to neglect the means needful to accompliſh them. No confidence in his Divine nature, or ſuperiority of grace, or celeſtial ſuccours, ever prevented his prayers to the Father; which in this trying moment, were repeated with ſuch perſevering energy, as ſhould inſpire our drowſy faculties, and

teach

teach us the ſacred prevalence of true devotion. By *his* practice of the duty, every objection to it muſt be entirely cancelled. For as he was beſt acquainted with the mind of God, he would certainly not have offered before Him, an *unneceſſary* or *unavailing* ſacrifice. The Supreme Being cannot be ſuppoſed to have been ignorant of the ſituation and ſufferings of his beloved Son; yet, that Son ſhewed his filial obedience and reverence of his heavenly Father, by the moſt ſubmiſſive and vehement ſupplications to him; at the ſame time that he manifeſted the entire reſignation of his own deſires, and was determined that his *death* ſhould demonſtrate the aſſertion which his whole *life* had exemplified, "*that he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who had ſent him.*"

An implicit *obedience* to the Almighty, is the primary leſſon reſulting, not from *this*

ſolemn tranſaction only, but from the whole ſeries of actions and events in the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt, one of the purpoſes of whoſe miſſion, was evidently to ſet before us a *perfect example*. It is impoſſible for any circumſtances of human life, to make ſuch a change in the affairs of men, as ſhall ſubject *them* to the like abaſement and humiliation as the Son of God endured; ſince he who was "*in glory with the Father before the world was, emptied himſelf of that glory*," and in order to accompliſh the gracious and comprehenſive plan of Divine goodneſs in our redemption, *willingly* ſubmitted to the ignominious and painful death of the croſs.

No being in the univerſe, therefore, can plead *rank* or *merit* as an exemption from any ſufferings or indignities, to which the will of the Deity may expoſe him: ſince "*God ſpared not his own Son, but de-*

livered him up for us all;" and "*Chriſt Jeſus, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame.*"

It is impoſſible to be ſo inſenſible to the ſenſations of pain, as to regard its approach with indifference: and the pretended apathy of the ſtoics, was more *affectation* than *reality*. Jeſus, on the contrary, maintains all the conſiſtency of a perfect character. In the midſt of the ſevereſt agony, he owns that his ſufferings are ſcarcely ſupportable, and acknowledges his earneſt wiſhes for deliverance, if the Providence of God can accompliſh its Divine decrees, conſiſtently with his deſires; but if the Cup may *not* paſs away from him, his *obedience* ſhall ſubdue his *reluctance*: "*Neverthelefs not as I will but as thou wilt.*" Let this comprehenſive ſentence be the Chriſtian's motto, under every trial of the preſent ſtate. Whether we ſuffer

from *preſent* evil, or the apprehenſion of *expected* diſtreſs; whether we are betrayed by the *treachery* of *falſe* friends, or wounded by the *neglect* of *real* ones: or if we have undeſervedly experienced the ſudden changes of fortune, and are caſt from the higheſt elevation of worldly greatneſs, to the loweſt depths of indigence and contempt, let us conſider our great Exemplar, and remember, that without the permiſſion of Heaven, ſuch calamities could not befal us; and that where evils unavoidably exiſt, we may be ſatisfied it is to promote ſome wiſe and gracious purpoſe, and may therefore cordially exclaim, though my nature is averſe to anguiſh, and cannot but wiſh it were removed, "*Neverthelefs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" It ſeems, likewiſe, I think, to be apparent from the conſideration of this picture, that the energies of the mind ſhould not

not be exhauſted by an uſeleſs anticipation of evil, even when we are morally certain that it will befall us. Our bleſſed Lord did not raſhly or enthuſiaſtically ruſh into danger: he patiently waited till the proper hour, when the prophecies reſpecting his paſſion were to be accompliſhed; and though he was from the firſt fully acquainted with the ſufferings that would attend the cloſe of his miſſion, he never appears to have indulged any diſpiriting apprehenſions previous to this melancholy ſcene, which was the prelude to his ſuffering and death. An even and dignified cheerfulneſs is ever recorded as the prevailing temper of his mind; and in viewing the agony of the Meſſiah, we are ſhocked with no oſtentation of falſe heroiſm, but are taught the real ſuperiority of that fortitude, which reſults from a ſincere and practical conviction of God's moral government, as believing

lieving that an all-perfect Being, will never admit a greater predominancy of evil, than ſhall be conſiſtent with the ultimate advantage of every creature: that it is entirely ſuitable to the Divine economy, to permit the actions of moral agents, to ſerve as mutual trials to each other; and therefore our Saviour teaches us to maintain a conſtant and immoveable equanimity of temper, when provocation is added to affliction, and not unkindly to cenſure the weakneſſes or faults of others, even when they aggravate the weight of ſevere diſtreſs.

Theſe are circumſtances that diſtinguiſh the religion of Chriſt, and exalt his doctrine above the ethics of heathen philoſophers. We are not ſhewn a ſpeculative rule of conduct, which preaches what man *ought to do*, but what no man *has done*: but our Lord exhibits an undeniable inſtance of the excellence of his maxims. In ſhort, he teaches

teaches us, with a pathos which no mere *precepts* could impart, he teaches us by his *Agony* to overcome affliction; to meet with boldneſs the approach of danger, humiliation, torture, and death; and to rely on the juſtice, goodneſs, and truth of the Almighty for a full reward.

This evening Mr. Worthington informed his audience, that he ſhould be obliged to diſcontinue his readings for ſome time, as he was under an unexpected neceſſity of going from home, and intended to ſet out for London early the next morning.

He then politely thanked them for the attention they had ſhewn his manuſcripts, entreating their candour would excuſe every thing in them which required indulgence.

"I am well aware," ſaid he, "that what you have heard is very defective; but I truſt it will ſerve as a mitigation of cenſure, to recollect what I have before told

told you, that the meditations in queſtion, were by no means intended for regular diſcourſes, which require method and preciſion." To this he added, that he hoped neither his ſtyle or manner had been thought too fanciful, or his delineations in any way offenſive to the ſerious mind; ſince he truſted, nothing had been ſuggeſted, that on the moſt rigid conſtruction could be deemed irreverent to the Divine word; and he beſought them to credit his ſolemn aſſurance, that he had never written one ſentence, but with a becoming reſpect for the inſpired Volume from whence his pictures were drawn. "The *Bible*," continued he, "has ever been the ſource of my beſt inſtruction, entertainment, and conſolation: I would make its *doctrines* my *rule of faith*; its *precepts* my *rule of practice*, and its *promiſes* my *anchor of hope*, both in life and death."

The

The idea of ſo ſoon parting with their agreeable friend, ſeemed to caſt a damp on the converſation of his neighbours; for which reaſon, after ſome enquiries reſpecting the plan of his excurſion, and the probable length of his abſence, it was propoſed, that thoſe of the party who had muſical talents, ſhould play in concert the following Hymn, which Mrs. Mitford, who was celebrated for her vocal powers, was accuſtomed to ſing in a ſuperior ſtile. The lines, though not deſigned for a *Sunday* Evening, were yet thought particularly appropriate at this time, as the motto affixed to them had been choſen for the text of a funeral ſermon, preached that morning at the pariſh Church, in memory of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who going to bed in perfect health, had died ſuddenly in the night.

AN EVENING HYMN.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.

BEFORE theſe drowſy eyes I cloſe,
O let me ſeal my peace with God;
Nor dare with unrepented ſins,
Provoke the terrors of his rod.

Image of Death! I now reſign
My wearied body to thy arms;
Yet let me pauſe, before I yield
My mind to thy Lethean charms.

For from this ſleep, if I ſhould wake
No more to light and life below;
Am I prepar'd to meet my Judge,
In that dread ſtate to which I go?

What, thro' the near concluded day,
Have I perform'd or ſaid aright?
Or is there nought I can review,
With approbation and delight?

Now

Now in this calm and ſilent hour,
When ſoft deſcend the ſhades of eve;
The idle buſtle of the world,
No more my ſenſes ſhall deceive.

Extinguiſh'd is that fev'riſh heat,
Which *paſſion* rais'd in ev'ry vein;
The blood no more impetuous flows,
But gently keeps its courſe again.

And now's the time, the moment this,
Sacred to virtue and to peace,
When earthly cares, hopes, fears, and joys,
With ev'ry idle thought, ſhould ceaſe.

The Prophet ſpeaks,—with ſolemn tone
Conſcience reverberates the ſound,
Prepare, this night, *to meet thy God*,
If righteous or unfruitful found.

Since when theſe eyes are clos'd in *ſleep*,
None can their *waking* aſcertain;
And in the ſtupor of repoſe,
They may *eternally* remain.

Almighty

Almighty Power! accept my pray'r,
Forgive the ſins which I have done;
Should I lie down and wake no more,
Receive my ſpirit through thy Son.

Relying on *His* blood alone,
I hope to have my faults forgiv'n,
Whoſe *Agony* prepares the way,
Safely to meet my God in Heav'n.

FINIS.

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